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A CC rally, comic books,... and the Tower of Babel p.10

Did God say he was sorry?... p.16

59th year of publication

A clash of worldviews in the oil patch

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MAY 30 2005

Dick Heinen

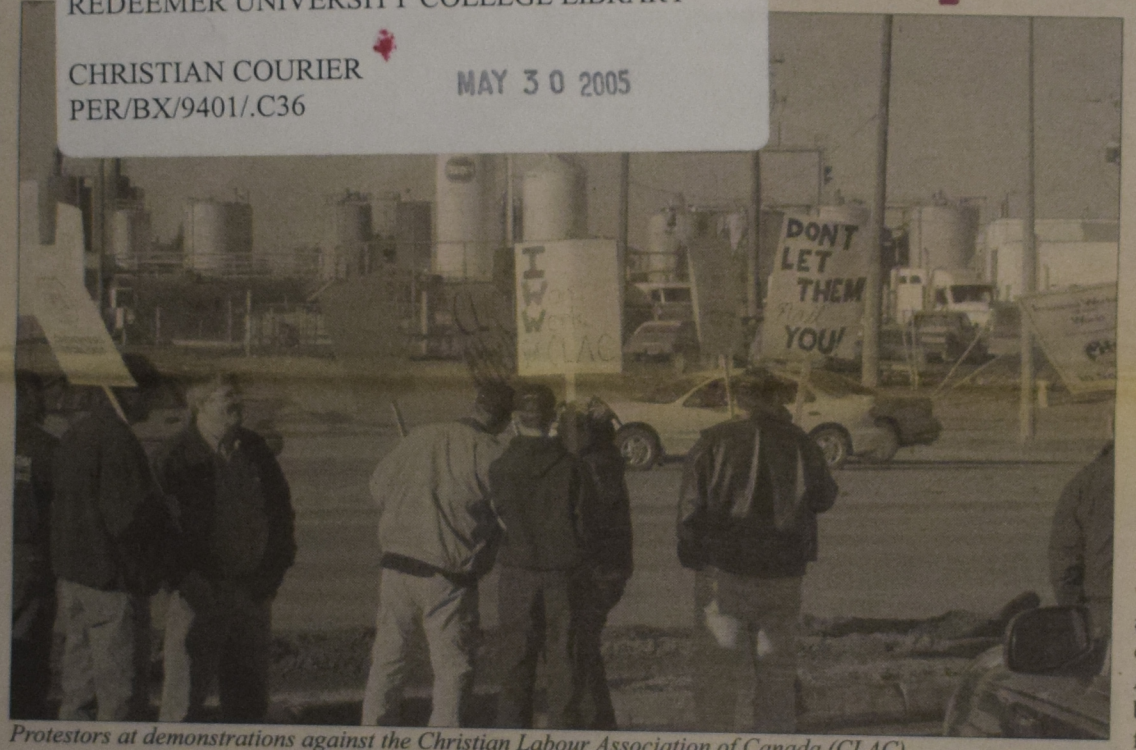
"CLAC crucifies workers." "Don't let them nail you."

These calculated, sacrilegious signs were carried by protestors at demonstrations against the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) in Edmonton and Fort McMurray in past weeks. The protests sparked a flurry of local and national media coverage, including by the CBC, the *Globe and Mail*, and the *National Post*.

What has riled up the protestors is CLAC's involvement in the construction of major oilsands projects in the Fort McMurray, Alberta, area. The building trade unions (BTU) previously controlled all mega-project work, and they are not happy to see a competitor such as CLAC break their monopoly control. Under the BTU's exclusive agreements, all workers, including subcontractors' employees – even the camp staff – had to belong to one of the building trade unions or an affiliated union.

The BTU is a collection of 14 international unions, all with headquarters in Washington, D.C. In Canada, they belong to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), a federation of unions with an affiliated membership of over three million workers. While the CLC proclaims itself as "the national voice of the labour movement," in reality it only speaks on behalf of less than 21 per cent of Canadian workers.

The BTU's members are organized along craft lines, with carpenters belonging to the carpenter's union, electricians to the electrician's union, and so on. On construction job sites, this has led to sometimes heated – and ridiculous – jurisdictional disputes, where, for example, electricians protest because a carpenter changed a light bulb.



Protestors at demonstrations against the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC)

CLAC takes a more common sense approach. Electricians, plumbers, carpenters – all the trades employed by a company – fall under one collective agreement, which respects classification differences but avoids the mess of jurisdictional disputes.

But that's not the only difference. Competition alone cannot explain the vehemence of the protest against CLAC.

Strong differences

At the heart of this protest lies a clash of worldviews. CLAC was formed in 1952 because its founders fundamentally disagreed with the practices of the established unions at that time, principally, the disregard for individual freedom of association through compulsory membership.

Not much has changed since then.

The CLC and many of its affiliated unions, including the BTU, still cling to a Jurassic view of labour relations, one that pits workers against employers in a constant class struggle. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which led the protests in Edmonton, bluntly states in the preamble to its constitution: "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. . . . Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth." Sounds like something straight out of the Communist Manifesto.

In contrast, CLAC's constitution recognizes the differences; it also acknowledges the "interdependence of employers and employees, their many common interests, their obligations and responsibilities toward each other."

Different worldviews lead to different practices. For the CLC and its affiliated unions, their class struggle basis leads them to practice the closed shop – workers must belong to the union or they lose their jobs. It has led them to establish a no-raid policy – workers unhappy with their union cannot switch to another union. And it leads them to have an adversarial approach to labour relations – the workplace is a war zone.

CLAC's basis in Christian social principles leads it to respect workers' freedom to choose which union they want to belong to, and defend their choices – against both employers and hostile unions. It leads it to practice a partnership approach to labour relations – a difficult struggle with employers who refuse to accept the union's role or to provide their workers' with a meaningful say in their day-to-day jobs.

CLAC has had run-ins with the building trade unions and other unions on many occasions over the course of its more than 50-year history. Today, it finds itself in the same position, defending its right to exist, defending its right to provide Canadian workers with an alternative to monopoly control by the CLC and its affiliated unions. Only this time the stakes are higher. A lot higher.

Opportunity for all

CLAC Local 63 has signed a long-term collective agreement with Horizon Construction Management Ltd. under the provisions of the Alberta Labour Relations Act. The agreement sets wages, benefits, and working conditions for all employees working on Canadian Natural Resource Ltd.'s (CNRL) $10.7 billion Horizon Oilsands Project. In line with CLAC's practices, the project will be open for CLAC-organized, BTU-represented, or non-union workers alike.

The project, the fourth major oilsand development in the Fort McMurray area, is located approximately 100 kilometres north of the city. It will be built in three phases and at its peak employ approximately 6,500 construction workers.

The sheer immensity and complexity of the undertaking led CNRL to conclude that a managed "open site," in which all labour sources – the building trade unions, CLAC, and the non-union pool – will be needed to complete the project successfully.

What has angered the BTU is that the project agreement is not

See CLAC on p. 2...

Synod 2005 gets ready to ... study and study and study

Harry der Nederlanden

The delegates to this years CRC Synod (June 11-18) have quite a bit of reading to do: the agenda weighs in at well over 600 pages. Synod will not be meeting on the Calvin College campus in Grand Rapids this year but in Chicago, or actually in Palos Heights, a suburb of Chicago – on the campus of Trinity College. In previous years synod has met at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa and at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta has issued an invitation for synod 2010.

The agenda is so bulky this year because it includes five study reports:

- a review the classical-local option with respect to women serving in the office of minister, elder, and evangelist. Four overtures have also been sent to synod in response to the committee's report.
- a review of the practice of appointing ethnic advisers to synod. It recommends that the practice be continued until such time that the delegates of an ethnic-minority heritage will number at least 25 percent of the total of all the delegates to any synod, starting in 2011.
- a study of Christian day-school education has swelled into a 130-page report on the importance of maintaining this commitment of the CRC to this kingdom activity.
- another study focuses on church education in the narrow sense, as that undertaken by the church directly. It has been in the making for three years. Synod will be urged to emphasize the importance of religious training and personal discipling ministries not only in places where Christian day-schools are not available but in every congregation.
- a restorative justice report. This is the first time that this subject is on synod's agenda and the committee is recommending a number of restorative justice principles for adoption.

Synod also will receive a recommendation from the Interchurch Relations Committee to permit clergy exchange between the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The synod of the RCA will entertain a similar recommendation. This committee is also recommending a continuing relationship with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (now a union of three separate denominations that have merged).

Various overtures and communications dealing with same-sex relationships and how these are treated at the congregational level are also on the agenda, particularly as the issue relates to First CRC Toronto. This might well prove to be one of the more difficult and painful issues for this synod to deal with.

Women as delegates to synod

Synod 2003 mandated a committee to review the church's 1995 decision regarding women in office. It was asked to survey the churches to find out how the present arrangement, that is, as a classis-local option, has been working out and come up with suggestions. It was not mandated to reconsider the biblical and theological principles.

The latest report builds on the report of 2000, which concluded that the matter should not be dealt with as a moral or confessional issue, but as a "wisdom issue": how do we deal with it in a way that enables us to go forward in unity while respecting diversity of opinion.

The response from church councils to the questionnaire sent out was quite low – only 52 percent. The responses show that there is still a strong divergence of opinion within the denomination.

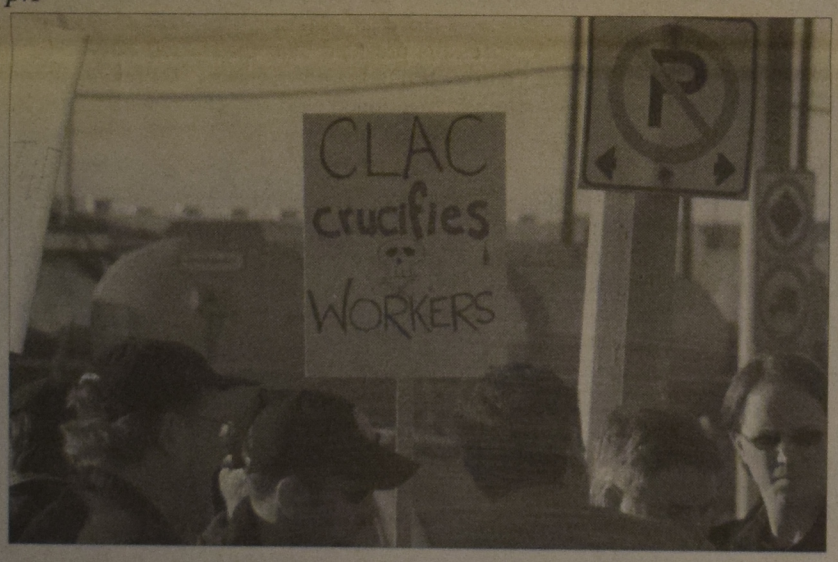
Over the past 5 years the number of churches that allow a woman to serve in all offices has gradually increased: 45 percent have women deacons; 23 percent women elders; 3 percent women ministers and 1 percent women evangelists.

About 50 percent of councils say they would be unaffected if the present policy remained in place, that is, as a classis-local option, and about the same number want the policy to be continued. About 26 percent of councils would like to see the restriction removed and allow women delegates to synod.

Many responding to the ques-

continued on p.3...

CLAC *...continued from p.1*



under their control. And because *it is not, the new arrangement* with CNRL opens the door for all Canadians to exercise their freedom to choose a union without being denied well-paid work opportunities in the oilsands.

This denial of monopoly control over the workers on the project is why the BTU and other affiliated unions protested against CLAC, the companies involved, and the Alberta government, which gave CNRL permission to negotiate a project agreement. It is the emotion that has characterized the media coverage.

Critical worker shortage

The BTU has come out swinging in the media, raising the red herring of temporary foreign workers. And yet it itself has had to rely on American workers from its affiliates in the United States to complete projects in the past. Perhaps it does not consider Americans to be foreigners.

Ledcor, one of the contractors involved on another oilsands project in the area, applied to the federal government to allow it to hire temporary foreign workers because of the critical shortage of certain skilled trades – electricians, pipefitters, ironworkers, and scaffolders. The undisputed fact – even by those within the building trade unions – is that there simply are not enough qualified, able, and willing journeymen to complete all the projects in the Fort McMurray area.

The lack of journeymen means that many who are trying to enter the skilled trades as apprentices – including aboriginal people, women, and young people – are not able to because of the current journeymen-to-apprentice ratios. It will take a number of years before Canada will have a sufficient number of journeymen to not be dependent on foreign workers in certain trades.

Some claim that foreign workers on the CNRL project will be paid less – as low as $5 per hour! – which will bring wages down. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Foreign workers will be paid the same as Canadian workers on the project. They will receive the same wages and benefits under CLAC's collective agreement and the same working conditions. In fact, it is far more costly for a company to use foreign workers because of the added costs of travel, accommodation, and accreditation.

Foreign workers will not take the place of qualified Canadian workers who want to work. CLAC has participated in recruitment drives as far away as the Atlantic provinces to ensure that every qualified, willing, and available Canadian, from Newfoundland to British Columbia, will have first opportunity to the work.

But part of the problem is that the BTU forbids its members from working under a CLAC agreement, imposing outrageous fines on those who cross union lines. Plus thousands of qualified tradespersons are working overseas in many different parts of the world. If they all came back to Canada, the need for foreign workers would disappear.

Spurious attacks

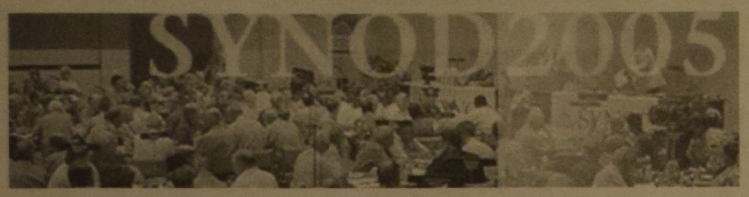
The BTU's spurious attacks are not limited to the temporary foreign worker issue. It has also attacked the collective agreement CLAC negotiated with CNRL, alleging that it undercuts wages and benefits. This is patently false. The CNRL agreement guarantees that every journeyman tradesperson, regardless of union affiliation, will be paid top dollar by anyone's standards in wages, bonuses, vacation pay, and overtime – with some earning $90,000 to $100,000 per year.

The agreement, however, is not just about wages and benefits. It's also about workers' quality of life. Working far up north in the oilsands, many miles from home, puts a huge strain on workers and their families. CLAC representatives listened to what their members wanted and negotiated meaningful time off for workers to be able to spend time at home.

The majority of workers will work two weeks on and then have a full week off to be with their families. They will be flown in and out of the project, a far better arrangement than any of the previous mega-project agreements negotiated by the building trade unions, where workers were bussed in and out five to six hours each way every weekend only to spend minimal time with their families.

The CNRL agreement is a breakthrough agreement, one that puts new meaning into the idea of freedom of association. CLAC invites anyone with an Alberta trade certification or a national red seal journeyman ticket to consider participating in this huge endeavour.

Dick Heinen is Alberta provincial director for the Christian Labour Association of Canada. Qualified and interested tradespersons wanting to work on the oilsands project in the Fort McMurray area should fax or e-mail an up-to-date resume to CLAC's Edmonton office (780-451-3976 or edmonton@clac.ca) or to CLAC's Fort McMurray office (780-791-9711 or fortmcmurray@clac.ca).



tionnaire felt that opening all offices to women involved a compromise of truth and that the local option promotes congregationalism (a bad thing – a lower degree of unity and identity with the denomination). However, over all the issue seems to be less divisive now than in the past. (Perhaps because the nosiest opponents have left?)

In the summary, the committee concludes that "across the denomination, the majority would rather live with a degree of tension while maintaining the status quo than enter into another battle over the issue of women that might jeopardize the relative peace of the present."

The report recommends that synod once again return to the issue of female delegates to synod when a majority of classes have declared the word *male* to be inoperative.

Ethnic advisers to synod

Over the years quite a number of synods have dealt with the question of how to get greater input and involvement in the CRC of people from ethnic minorities. It shied away from increasing the size of boards to make room for a greater diversity of members. One way it addressed the issue was by creating ethic advisers to synod. This was done for a period of 5 years and is due for review this year.

The practice was commended not just to benefit synod but also to serve as a training ground for people from different ethnic minorities and to give their communities a greater sense of ownership.

This committee, too, conducted a survey (construed as a bad sign by some). The level of response to the questionnaire was rather mediocre. In fact, the committee says that some councils even appeared to be unaware that there were ethnic advisers at synod (others may see this as a bad sign). Only 3 percent of non-ethnic congregations responded to the survey (definitely a bad sign).

The statistics show that over the last few years the number of minority delegates has on several occasions reached almost 10 percent. Of our congregations 163 identify themselves as ethnic and another 56 as multiethnic. That amounts to 22 percent of the CRC by congregations. (Much higher if the Dutch congregations in Canada were counted as ethnic. Many Canadians see them as such.)

The report, displaying a keen awareness of the binational character of the CRC, points out that by 2050 nonwhites will be 52.3 percent of the U.S. population. The churches, complains the report, have not been very responsive to synod's urging to send more nonwhite delegates to synod. (The report's own statistics, however, show that the percentage of ethnic delegates is often a bit higher than the percentage of ethnic members in the CRC (5.8-7.4 percent).

The report concludes that the appointment of ethnic advisers to synod hasn't served as a stepping stone toward a greater sense of ownership and participation on the part of ethnic congregations. But it has served to enrich the experience and deliberations of the CRC. The denomination has sought other ways to encourage greater ethnic diversity that are pointed out in the report and the denomination has made a slow but gradual progress.

The committee wants the church to become "more intentional" in increasing ethnic presence. It proposes setting numerical goals: 25 percent of each classical delegation should be minority. Not enough minority elders in a classis? Send deacons. What if they can't afford to take a week off? Pay their wages. (One wonders about the Republican representation on this committee: they haven't been too happy about quotas.)

Interlude

I skip over the report on Christian day schools. It not only has surveys but numerous appendices dealing with tax policy. Shudder! I will come back to it in a future issue because it is over 120 pages long and deserves more attention than I can give it here.

Having read through three meaty, often complex reports, I'm already becoming a bit giddy. I'm also beginning to feel deep compassion for this year's delegates, who are expected to digest them all and address themselves to the issues with knowledge, wisdom and patience. Delegates going to synod 2005 should pack with them an extra supply of patience to fortify themselves in the discussion of all these reports.

The Committee to Study Church Education continues work begun by Classis Alberta North, which brought it to synod in 2001 with an overture calling for a clearer definition of the church's educational ministries. Well, they got it – in spades.

The committee consulted many experts and agencies, did the by now obligatory surveys and worked with CRC Publications to

See **Synod** *page 7*

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

The political authority of the papacy

With the election last month of Pope Benedict XVI, the world's attention was transfixed by the colorful events in Rome. Even the media, which tend to exhibit at least passive antipathy to the Roman Catholic Church, devoted an inordinate amount of time to the death and funeral of John Paul II and the election of Cardinal Ratzinger as his successor. By contrast, when the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Irineos I, was deposed only weeks later by his own synod over controversial land sales in the old city, the western press paid scant attention. No round-the-clock coverage of the election of a replacement. No eagerly awaited black smoke or tolling bells.

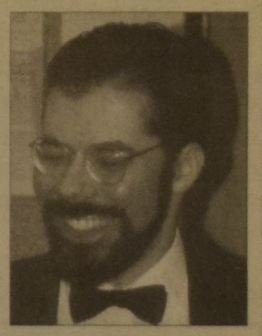
Of course, much of this can be explained by the fact that Catholics far outnumber Orthodox Christians. Moreover, given that the Roman Church is more organizationally unified than the ethnically fissiparous Orthodox bodies, its leader possesses more visibility on the international stage. Finally, the four historic Orthodox patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria live under governments not entirely enthusiastic over their presence, while the Moscow patriarchate is insufficiently distant from the Russian government to claim the same stature as the Bishop of Rome.

The Pope's position is different. During the middle ages his predecessors presided over their own sizeable territory in central Italy known as the Papal States. As such they functioned not only as the supreme heads of the church but as temporal princes, thereby giving them a certain independence from other rulers wishing to domesticate the church for political purposes. In the mid-19th century the newly unified kingdom of Italy annexed the Papal States, thus depriving the Pope of his political independence. In the ensuing decades the Pontiff and the Italian state co-existed with barely concealed mutual hostility. Only in 1929 did he acquire once again a modicum of political power over the territory immediately encompassing the Vatican and its associated church buildings. Thus when Benedict became Pope he also became head of state of the smallest sovereign territory on earth. No other bishop in any other church can claim such status.

It is a mark of the papacy's stature that even Christians not in communion with Rome expressed interest in the process governing the choice of John Paul's replacement. The OrthodoxyToday.org website carried a number of commentaries by Orthodox Church leaders claiming the new Pope as an ally in the on-going spiritual battle over the soul of western civilization – this despite the tensions between Orthodox and Catholics in the Balkans, Ukraine and elsewhere.

Even many Reformed Christians I know were praying in advance for the College of Cardinals as its members met to undertake their historic task. The irony that those not recognizing the Pope's authority nevertheless asked for the Holy Spirit's guidance in the process was not lost on them.

However, all of us know that when, say, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church speaks publicly, the secular media – outside of *The Grand Rapids Press* – pay little or no attention. By contrast, when the Pope urged President Bush not to attack Iraq, this made news. Like it or not, the Pope is inevitably a political figure commanding a visibility no other Christian leader can claim. How will Pope Benedict use this political prominence? It is too early to say for certain, but he looks likely to follow his immediate predecessor's path in many respects, with the probable exception of the latter's gruelling travel regimen. Whether or not we approve of this role, all Christians nevertheless have a stake in Benedict's witness to the larger world.



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Uneditorial

Springtime on the trail in Short Hills

Harry der Nederlanden

For several weeks the trails in Short Hills, where Rose and I like to go hiking on Sundays, have been too muddy to tempt us. We're nature lovers – but only when it isn't "red in tooth and claw" or buzzing with gnats and mosquitos. Dry trails are also a plus.

At last the trails were navigable in most parts and we ventured out, but only a few minutes into our hike I almost got bowled over by a deer. No, not by my wife – that's spelled "dear" – though she does bowl me over once in a while.

Rose didn't even see the deer. She was looking down at the many kinds of wild flowers popping out after the first warm weather we've had this spring.

Rose has turned me too into a connoisseur of wildflowers. She can identify quite a few of them. In my attempt to keep up with her, I bought a book about wildflowers. Oprah and Dr. Phil inspired me to make this effort: if your wife is good at something, you have to try to catch up and pass her. My book learning came in very handy.

The first part of the trail was downhill and I could show off a little, leaping over the muddy parts of the trail that had been churned up by horses' hooves, while Rose detoured through the new grass. In some places those hoofprints plowed veritable craters in the trail, but I leapt them fearlessly and gracefully as a deer.

Before leaping, however, I was always careful to check for cross traffic from leaping deer. I'd hate to collide with one of them in mid-air right over a patch of mire and horse dung. Even though we've been married for close to 40 years, I like to retain my dignity in front of my wife. Dignity means a lot to her. It's one of the main reasons she married me: I look dignified even when I'm leaping over mudholes.

Some 15 minutes into our hike, however, we came to a long, steep hill – a very long, steep hill. But I'm quite proud of my climbing abilities, so I chugged on ahead of Rose – full speed to demonstrate my still youthful vigor. The female of the species, Darwin taught us, is really turned on by male vigor and spring is the time to turn it on.

This was the time my wildflower studies really began to pay off. About 50 metres up the trail, I stopped and bent over a tiny flower at the side of the trail. "Oh, look, Rose – huff – a tiny white flower – puff – on a short stem! – huff – Isn't that an – aah – a white little snowstar?"

I waited patiently as she caught up to peer down in the grass beside me. "Snowstar? I've never heard of a snowstar. You mean snowdrop?"

"Well, it's white as snow and shaped like a tiny star, so it ought to be called snowstar."

My wife gave me that disapproving schoolteacher look that she often summons to counter my irrefutable logic. She was unaware, however, of my hidden agenda. In the meantime, I had caught my breath and was ready to take on the next 50 metres.

As I reached the limit of my next sprint, I was beginning to panic. Short Hills they call it, but there was nothing short about this hill.

Ahead on the path was a huge pile of horse droppings and I considered stopping over it to admire its hidden shapes like a ancient priest reading entrails, but my wife isn't fooled that easily. She'd certainly catch on. So I staggered on another ten metres before collapsing over a small yellow flower with three narrow petals.

"Oooh, honey – wheeze – look at this! Pant-pant. I found a trillium! Puff-puff. Should I dig it up and take it home?"

I knew the answer to that, of course. But my question provided a rationale for my ignoble position on all fours. You don't hold together a marriage for almost 40 years without a certain measure of slyness and duplicity.

"That's not a trillium," she snapped in disgust, leaning on my shoulder and almost causing me to do a nose-dive into the little plant. "And you're not allowed to pick flowers. It's a conservation area."

"Well, huff-huff, we'd conserve it in our back yard." I was trying to start a drawn-out argument. But she didn't bite.

"Look, h-hit – hi mean, it has three petals. Doesn't h-hit mean h-hit's a trillium – a golden trillium?"

"Trillium has three leaves, not three petals. And the flowers are white. Besides, it's too early for trillium."

Pulling myself to my feet by a corner of her jacket, I was ready for the next stretch. That should take me to the top of the hill. My study of natural topography has led me to suspect that there was a down slope not far ahead.

"Look, dear – straight up. Look what we've been missing. We're right in a grove of wild cherry trees and all the cherry blossoms are 30 feet overhead."

As she stood gazing straight up into the crowns of the trees, I did a couple of quick bends to pump more oxygen into my lungs like a human bellows. By the time she got the crick out of her neck and got back to the horizontal, I was already starting up the path with the usual Darwinian vigor of my gender.

But, in the words of a great man, I had misunderestimated my capabilities. I had mentally divided the distance to the top into three equal parts. But math can be deceiving. The third equal part was much longer than the first two. Before long, I was cursing Pythagoras and his tribe. They undoubtedly studied geometry sitting on their agorasses in the Aereopagus.

But nature threw me a lifebuoy – a bounty of tiny blue flowers that spilled down the side of the hill across the path. With my last bit of strength I reached out to the lovely lifesavers and pitched headfirst into them.

I rolled around in them like a cat in catnip. "Little blue flowers – wheeze – that grow in – gasp – clusters on long stems!" I cried to the treetops of maples sprouting green feathers in their crowns. "Little – huff – longstemmed – puff – bluebowbells!"

I admit I'm only beginning to catch on to the elements of flower classification. But to me it seems eminent good sense to classify flowers by color and by size and by the length of their stems. After all, that's the first thing that meets your eye. And isn't botany an empirical science?

"What are you doing rolling in the poison oak?" asked Rose.

I levitated out of there as if the laws of gravity had suddenly been suspended.

"Where? Where?" I squealed, beating at my clothes as if they had caught fire.

Then I spotted the cruel glint in her eye. Girls from Iowa are usually very kind and longsuffering, but buried underneath there is also a bloody mean streak. Comes from killing chickens – they're mostly roosters, you know – and castrating hogs.

"Haw-haw – very funny. I was just inhaling the fragrance of the long-stemmed bluebowbells. They have a very delicate perfume, you know, and you have to get your nose right in there to smell them."

I had a vision of her bending down deeply to get a whiff of the flowers, and then I'd.... But, no, after all it was Sunday, and we were here for the healing balms of mother nature.

Rose raised a handful of grass to her mouth and took a big bite. I'd wondered what she was munching on. I'd assumed that she had smuggled along one of those energy bars, and, unwilling to share with me, had taken a bite while I wasn't looking.

"Is there by any chance a fellow called Nebuchadnezzar in your family tree?" I asked. "Why are you grazing on grass out here? What's wrong with our front lawn?"

"It's not grass – it's wild chives. Want some?"

That's called false generosity: offering something to somebody knowing they'll refuse. Had it been an energy bar, she wouldn't have offered me a bite.

"I bet it was growing in horse dung," I said nastily, and she stopped munching for a moment.

"Well, you should know," she sniffed. "You've been rolling in it."

Sure enough, you want to get closer to nature and before you know it you're covered with manure. Where does that romantic stuff about harmony with nature come from anyway? Before coming out here I had to take an extra Allegra so my eyes wouldn't water, my nose wouldn't run and my ears wouldn't close up.

And then there are all these steep hills. If nature were actually a friend and home to man, the trails would all be downhill, wouldn't they? And why is nature so fond of horse dung and cow manure?

As these questions trilled through my head, I cast my eyes heavenward, and there in the tree above me trilling a merry little tune sat a yellow-breasted, black-winged golden bill.

After I master the art of classifying and naming flowers, I will buy a bird book. Maybe the birds know something I don't.

"Honey, look up there: a yellow-breasted, black-winged golden bill!"

Rose's eyebrows arched up. I could tell she was already impressed by my knowledge of ornithology. (That's the study of birds, you know.)

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Letters

A heartfelt thanks to Canadian liberators

Recently we again celebrated the end of World War 2 and commemorated the unique role Canada played in the liberation of Holland and other European countries that suffered terribly under brutal Nazi tyranny.

Our family and numerous others will always be deeply thankful for the thousands of Canadians who so courageously risked and even gave their lives during the Allies' long, costly fight for our freedom and future.

I vividly remember the Canadian liberators entering our village and, together with others, ending the ruthless Nazi rule that had such a devastating, deadly impact on millions of Europeans, including the murder of countless Jews (the Holocaust) and other defenseless neighbors who were systematically eliminated by horrible ideological forces. These demonic powers neither feared the God of freedom, justice, and mercy nor respected in any way the human rights and fundamental freedoms of vulnerable people – not even starving children.

In faith and hope, I continue to pray and work in community with all who cherish the practice of full-fledged justice for people everywhere.

May a united Canada, led by our federal and provincial governments, truly stand on guard for the human dignity and civil liberties rooted in dynamic public justice that actively seeks the well-being of powerless people the world over.

May we, citizens and politicians alike, be given the basic commitment, wisdom and courage to pursue lasting peace, promote inclusive justice, and practice responsible stewardship. May Canada and our world increasingly experience a real sense of community, harmony, equity and solidarity.

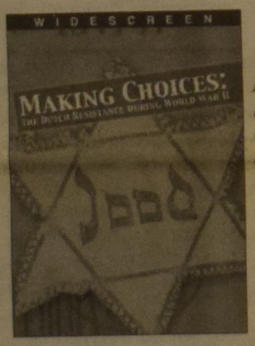
Then, we'll actually enjoy participatory democracy and public accountability worthy of an open pluralistic society.

Our country faces, once more, major fiscal, political and national-unity challenges. It is imperative that particularly our politicians and opinion-makers act with integrity and provide visionary leadership. It must conscientiously articulate and clearly convey our heartfelt appreciation and abiding respect for the selfless service rendered by valiant Canadians for the sake of genuine peace and justice for all people, especially the poor and powerless.

Such honest leadership supported by concerned citizens will build a united Canada, strong and free, and a world filled with hope and life.

Gerald Vandezande, C.M.
Scarborough, Ont

This letter appeared in Toronto Star of May 7, 2005



DVD produced by former Calvin Student documenting the Dutch resistance in WWII. See page 15 for related story and order information.

It's the office we must honor

A few years ago, the then Ontario Premier Mike Harris accompanied Nelson Mandela to a large gathering of elementary school students. If my memory serves me correctly the gathering took place in the Toronto Skydome. What stood out for me about that gathering was that Mr. Mandela was cheered and Mr. Harris was booed by the students. It did not take a rocket scientist to discover that it was, in fact, the teachers who had poisoned the minds of their politically naïve charges. Premier Harris had been tough on public and Catholic schoolteachers, believing that local school boards were often held hostage by the powerful teacher's unions. So he shifted the power to finance schools from the local to the provincial level. The point of my story is not whether Harris was right or wrong, but I wanted to point out the fact that the premier was booed by students. Teachers failed their students in encouraging that kind of disrespect.

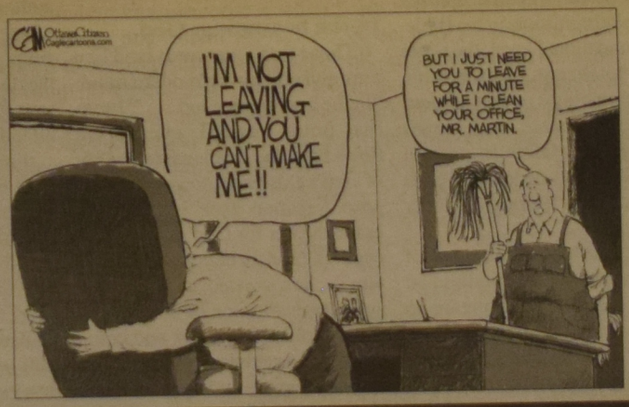
Around the same time, a Canadian journalist visited the Netherlands in connection with the 50th anniversary of the Liberation. He commented on the fact that he had observed with pleasure that when government officials appeared in public, everybody applauded, whether they agreed with their politics or not. He contrasted this situation with the ugly reality of partisan responses to government officials in Canada.

Which brings me to the situation today in the United States. President Bush is going to give the keynote address at the graduation convocation at Calvin College this year. I hear a lot of complaints about that from some of my brothers and sisters in the faith. They interpret the visit as a bolstering of Republican policies, in particular of the war in Iraq. I honestly don't understand that kind of reaction.

Shouldn't Calvinists, of all people, understand that we are supposed to honor those who are set over us in authority? Aren't we taught anymore to make a distinction between the person and the political views he holds on the one hand, and the office he holds on the other? Just because we live in a democracy doesn't take away from the fact that President Bush is a God-ordained ruler (I held to that position some years ago, too, when a dubious election resulted ended in Bush' favor. C'est la vie. C'est God's will).

In between elections, President Bush should be honored as the head of state. As such his visit to the Calvin College campus should be seen as a privilege. Shame on those who would turn the visit into a political donnybrook. I would encourage them to re-read Romans 13.

Bert Witvoet
St. Catharines, Ont.



Dismayed at column

I write because I was dismayed at Vicky Van Andel's recent column on women in office (May 2, 2005). I hope that other readers, no matter what side they may be on in the debate, were equally dismayed. In this column, despite starting off saying she was not going to elaborate on why all offices should be open to women, Van Andel does just that. She appeals to experience and culture as two reasons why the change should be made.

She notes that in her congregation women do preach, and they have experienced that as a good thing and, as she puts it, "our experience gives us the knowledge that it is right for us to include women." An appeal to experience? My Mormon friend has "experienced" quite a spiritual high reading the Book of Mormon – he too thinks that this experience has given him the knowledge that it is right. But he's wrong. Appealing to experience alone to justify a theological position may be nice rhetoric, but it is bad argumentation. We are sinful creatures, and we can indeed like things that are bad, so the fact that we like something, or experience it as good doesn't mean that it is actually good. To find that out we have to look to Scripture.

Even worse was Van Andel's appeal to culture as a reason for the church to change. She quotes a woman who thinks all church offices should be opened up because otherwise, "the church is not keeping pace with the changing times." Do we really want our churches keeping pace with society? This is the same society, after all, that thinks that religion is ridiculous, homosexuality is worth encouraging, adultery is ordinary, and abortion is okay. If a Christian is going to appeal to society in any sort of theological debate it seems far more legitimate to say that if society is doing one thing, then we as the church should, rather than follow along, do the exact opposite.

I'm not trying to argue against women in office here – rather I am arguing for good argumentation. Van Andel's column doesn't contribute to the debate, and indeed it misleads people who are struggling to figure out what are and are not worthy logical arguments in this debate. Clearly we have to look to Scripture for our answers, not culture and experience.

Jon Dykstra
Edmonton AB

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A radical antagonism – the Bible and secular worldviews

"It need not further be denied," argued James Orr, "that between this view of the world involved in Christianity, and what is sometimes called 'the modern view of the world' there exists a deep and radical antagonism." James Orr observed this 'deep and radical antagonism' over a century ago. Can we possibly fail to see it now?

As Christians, we are unavoidably engaged in a great battle of worldviews – a conflict over the most basic issues of truth and meaning. A worldview that starts with the existence and sovereign authority of the self-revealing God of the Bible will be diametrically opposed to worldviews that deny God or engage in what we might call 'defining divinity down.'

At the heart of this controversy lies the irreducible obstacle of biblical authority. As a matter of fact, it may be impossible to overestimate the true depth of postmodern antipathy to the Bible – at least to the Bible as an authoritative revelation from God.

Against personal autonomy

Just consider what the modern secular mind confronts in the Bible. At the foundational level, the Bible makes a "totalizing" claim to truth. In the terminology of postmodern academic discourse, this means that the Bible claims to present absolute and non-negotiable truth that effectively trumps all other authorities.

In an intellectual context of personal autonomy and individual self-expression, this appears to represent an unfair imposition of authority and a violation of the contract theory that lies at the heart of the modern experiment. We can "contract" with the Bible to serve as a guide, but that contract is open to constant renegotiation.

And the Bible contains so much material that runs against the moral sense of a largely – secularized society. Let's just be honest and admit right up front that the Bible pulls no punches and leaves no room for a public relations effort to clean up the dust storm. The Bible begins with a straight-forward declaration of divine creation, complete with a divine design for every aspect of the created order.

Then, we confront the creation of human beings as made in the image of God, and thus uniquely gifted and accountable as moral and spiritual creatures. And, we add, human beings are made male and female to the glory of the Creator. There it is – gender as part of the goodness of God's creation. This is no vision of gender differences as mere social construction.

Marriage immediately follows as the divinely-designed institution for human ordering, reproduction, sexuality, and romantic fulfillment. Marriage – the union of one man and one woman – is presented as an objective reality constituted as a moral covenant with legal and moral boundaries, not as a contract to be made, remade, or unmade at will.

Then comes sin. The third chapter of Genesis clearly fails to meet muster in terms of modern psychotherapeutic expectations. Responsibility for sin is laid right at human feet; and the consequences of sin – downright repressive – are worse than draconian. Most troubling of all, sin is presented as something that tells the truth about us – not merely the truth about a sinful world system. From beginning to end, the Bible undermines the modern secular worldview at its very foundation.

In the beginning, God...

Those first four words land like nitroglycerin on the modern mind: "In the beginning, God . . . ." From that point onward, everything flows from the fundamental reality of God's existence, power, and purpose. Creation itself is explained as the theater for God's own glory, even as human beings, male and female, are created in God's image. The institution of marriage is shown to be God's gift and command, not a sociological adaptation to prevailing cultural conditions. Humans are given responsibility as both stewards and rulers of the earth, ordered to subdue the earth to the Creator's glory.

Of course, to the postmodern mind, Genesis is hopelessly "speciesist" even as (to use their language) it presents a "totalizing meta-narrative of hegemonistic authoritarianism." In other words, it tells us in no uncertain terms that God is God and we are not, even as it reveals that humanity fulfills a special purpose for God's glory.

The Pentateuch – all five books – presents an unvarnished picture of humanity's sin and its consequences. To a culture deeply committed to a therapeutic worldview, this is just too much. Now that sin has been banished from our moral vocabulary, what are postmodern individuals to do with the Fall, the giving of the Law, the sacrificial system and blood atonement? Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac is now cited by postmodern critics as the Bible's second most egregious example of God-inspired child abuse (the first, of course, is the cross of Christ).

The stumbling stone of law

The Law is another stone of stumbling for the modern mind. Moral relativism rules the field of postmodern ethics, with laws seen as socially constructed and needlessly oppressive instruments of subjugation. In many law schools, a movement known as "critical legal theory" claims that laws generally reveal hidden claims of manipulative power that should be de-constructed for the betterment of all humankind. Thus, consistent with the postmodernist's complete embrace of subjectivity, laws exist to be endlessly renegotiated and reinterpreted.

Of course, one of the most cherished maxims of the postmodern mind is the so-called "death of the author." The reader, not the author, of a text is the ruling authority. Put simply, the postmodernist believes that the text means what the reader says it means, not what the author intended.

Jump from that to this: "You shall be careful therefore to do as the Lord your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it might go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess." (Deuteronomy 5:32-33)

So much for subjectivity, reinterpretation, and renegotiation! The postmodernist demands a hermeneutic of suspicion, demanding that the text meet his expectations. The Bible sets down a hermeneutic of submission as God demands obedience from his people – nothing less.

The God who reveals his will

The Bible presents the living God, Creator of the entire cosmos, as a speaking God who addresses his people with authoritative revelation. "Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live?" (Deuteronomy 4:33) As Israel was to learn, revelation must lead to obedience, lest God's wrath fall upon the people.

The Lord does not invite his covenant people to speculate about his character, his power, or his purpose. He demands total obedience, even as he reveals his saving purpose and he sets down his covenant. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other Gods before me." (Exodus 20:2-3)

The rest of the Old Testament continues the pattern and widens the divide. God elects Israel as his chosen people, inviting charges of ethnocentrism. Then, violating modern norms of war, Israel is charged to wage a holy war against pagan nations. God is presented as the supreme ruler of all nations, the only true Sovereign in a world of contending kingdoms. The prophets attack injustice and the abuse of privilege, within and without.

To these must be added claims of miracles, supernatural occurrences, prophets, and impositions of law. All this amounts to one great obstacle for so many modern people, whose worldview is so firmly established in secular terms that the Bible seems more of a problem than a solution.

No social activist or therapist

And what of the New Testament? Instead of refuting the Old Testament, the New Testament fulfills the Old, pushing the envelope of secular suspicion even further. Now we confront the great claim of the incarnation – that Jesus the Christ is fully God and fully man. Miracles are documented, the teaching of Jesus is presented in full force, and the Gospel is laid before our eyes.

Then come the cross and the empty tomb. God's determinative plan to save his people from sin comes to a climax in the suffering and death of Christ, presented as God's plan set into action before the creation of the earth. The empty cross points to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and the truth claims of the Gospel contradict any effort to reduce Jesus to a mere teacher or guide, a social activist or a proto-therapist.

The church is established as God's people on earth; an eschatological people eventually drawn from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. And then, looming in the future, lies judgment. The realities of Heaven and Hell are presented as dual destinations for humanity, and the wrath of God is promised to be poured out upon sinners, even as the mercy of God is extended to all who have come to Christ by faith. The way to salvation is narrow; the road to destruction is wide. There is but one Savior and one way of salvation.

All this is just too much for the postmodern mind to handle. A "deep and radical antagonism" separates the Bible and our postmodern culture. But then, since the Fall that antagonism has always existed, separating obedience to God's truth from the demand for human autonomy.

Christians are often perplexed by resistance to the Bible and to the Gospel. We tend to distance ourselves from the reality that the Bible sounds so exceedingly strange to modern and postmodern ears. We underestimate the distance of the divide between biblical Christianity and secular worldviews.

All this should remind us of our constant evangelistic and apologetic task – and of the fact that salvation is all by grace. After all, it's not that we were smart enough to wade through all this and emerge as believers. Instead, our eyes were opened so that we would see. That radical antagonism James Orr was talking about isn't overcome by force of argument and persuasion alone, but by grace. As we engage in the controversies and debates of this age, we had better keep that great fact always in the forefront of our thinking.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. is president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. For more articles and resources by Dr. Mohler, go to www.albertmohler.com.

Synod ...continued from page 3

Delegates from Classis Pacific Hanmi, a Korean classis, at a previous synod

produce this report. The churches that responded to the survey were mostly well-established, middle-to-large churches. The responses indicate a surprisingly high (to me, at least) level of satisfaction with their church education programs. But, then, perhaps the responding churches responded precisely because they felt pretty confident about what they're doing. (Cynic.)

According to the survey, however, church education leaders were not so sure they were "adequately developing the Christian leadership potential of members." In fact, 40 percent thought not. A majority (60 percent) of church leaders admitted that there's little or no coordination between what is taught, on the one hand, in church and Sunday school and, on the other, in GEMS, Cadets and other youth groups. (What an abysmal failing! Surely, there's nothing worse than such a lack of coordination -- one group studying guilt and another gratitude. No wonder the centre doesn't hold.)

Surveys like this are always great fun to read and then jump to conclusions. For many more statistics, I refer you to the online agenda on the CRC website. Here's another example: 68 percent of respondents thought that denominational agencies should continue to publish educational materials. (You mean 32 percent actually think we shouldn't?! Now, that is interesting.)

Along with the obligatory survey, this report also gives us the obligatory overview of all that's new in our postmodern situation and the obligatory bow to holism (You learn from everybody, from everything that happens and it goes on till you die).

Sorry if I'm beginning to sound a bit jaded, but like so much of the programmatic material written by educators, this report finds it necessary to spell out in educationese the fundamental, the obvious and what we all know already. It all needs to be done so you can put it on a chart, make it more "intentional" (obligatory buzzword) and, of course, measure your progress periodically with the obligatory questionnaire. (At last I begin to understand why pastors begin to grind their teeth when the word "questionnaire" is spoken.)

One of the conclusions of this report is that "we must change our paradigm regarding learning." If you don't groan when the word "paradigm" comes up, this report is for you.

Look, the report gives a good survey of what's involved in church education in terms of the denomination's total ministry and that's worth a gander. But I do get a bit tired of being told that while in the past we focused on head knowledge now we're so clever that we're going to focus on everything. The total overhaul envisioned with the requisite integration and coordination is enough to put your eyes permanently out of focus.

"Many agencies support the local church in this important ministry," says the report. "However, (you knew that was coming) such training has often been piecemeal, disjointed, and *lacking in intentionality"*(emphasis mine).

The managerial mind is at it once again, but in this the postmodern era, the information age, the managerial mind rules all. "The time may well come," the report intones portentously, "when appropriate credentialing of church educators should be made mandatory." Do I hear an Amen anywhere? Anybody?

Fear not. Educators write reports like this all the time – and yet lots of good work gets done anyhow.

Another report we'll save for another time is the one on Restorative Justice. It has been some time in the making – and it doesn't have the obligatory survey (at least, not yet), so I'm looking forward to it.

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

Resisting nationalistic education

Dr. Stanley Hauerwas was called America's "best theologian" by *Time* magazine. He is a United Methodist attending an Episcopalian church who calls himself a "high-church Mennonite" while considering becoming Roman Catholic. He teaches theology at Duke Divinity School and has been labeled by his critics as a "sectarian fideistic tribalist."

As a "post-liberal," he is not concerned with running the country, as he would put it, but rather with strengthening the church community. I should not have been surprised when I heard what sounded like a ringing endorsement of Christian education after a provocative lecture at UWO in April entitled "The End of Religious Pluralism."

Public education is founded on the desire not to offend anyone, he said. "So everyone's tradition gets washed out and religion becomes a personal opinion," he charged. "Muslims won't put up with that bulls—t."

In Hauerwas' mind, a country is first of all concerned about *managing* its citizens. Public education is the most effective way to ensure that conflict does not arise and that the status quo is never challenged. "Its 'nationalistic education,'" he quipped. "Its where your kids are made into willing members of the nation-state."

Christian communities need to cultivate minds and hearts that first and foremost identify with Christ as Lord, not the survival of some state. This is what disables Christians in the States, says Hauerwas, an outspoken pacifist, from dissenting an unjust war. "Bush's 'we' is not American Christians!" he insisted. Christ calls us to be peacemakers, he maintained. "We are at war with war!"

Education as Spiritual Formation

"Public high school is where we send our kids to be destroyed," he continued. Children are formed by the culture they inhabit, and the public system functions in harmony not only with the nation-state, but with the broader capitalist system and its media.

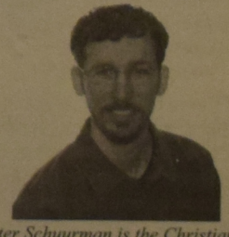
Children need to be nurtured within a distinctively Christian community. "Kids don't have minds to make up until they've been formed," explained Hauerwas. "We need to reclaim the spiritual formation of our children." Does this make them incapable of talking with Muslims and Jews? "No," he replied. "If they are formed in the way of the crucified Christ, how can they ever be arrogant? You witness, and you listen."

He was advocating something more difficult than the superficial pluralism that governments prefers. "We have to get over the idea of forming kids that are 'relatively good'– if you want them to be Christians," he said. "We are destroying strong faith in the name of tolerance." Students lose heart in a world where being a dutiful subject of the reigning forces overrides being a deeply passionate Christian. Idols like the state and the individual need to be named and defamed when they function as such in our lives.

Alternative Educations

We cannot, however, conclude that Christian schools are the only place where such true faith is nurtured. Walsh and Keesmat put it rather boldly in their new book *Colossians Re-mixed:* "Insofar as Christian schools are applauded in our society as producing fine, middle-class, hard-working and hard-consuming citizens, we are not sure that they are providing much of an alternative." They go on to maintain that genuine Christian education may not involve 'schooling' at all. Whatever form it takes, however, it should develop a community of "social misfits"– students that don't readily "fit in" to the prevailing culture of status and consumption.

Christians find themselves in all different traditions of education and training. All of them are dangerous, including home schooling. I work, as Brian Walsh does, within the public system of higher education, seeking to nurture faithful disciples of Christ who don't easily "fit in." If the world is crazy with greed, anxiety and indifference, the sane thing to do is to form ourselves and our children in ways that are counter to it. The gift of Hauerwas is his insistence that we live in a post-Christian world, and we don't need to bend over backwards to adjust to it. In fact, we need to shape a loving alternative community that doesn't replicate its idols.



Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.

Why Koran is such a hot button

Ben Arnoldy and Owais Tohid
ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN – When Ashiq Nabi got into an argument with his wife, she held up a Koran to protect herself, setting into motion a deadly series of events. Mr. Nabi then pushed his wife, say human rights activists, sending Islam's holy book onto the floor and prompting the local mullah in Spin Kakh, Pakistan, to file blasphemy charges.

Before the police could act, Nabi was spotted in town and the mullah allegedly spread the word over the mosque's loudspeakers. A mob of more than 400 villagers chased Nabi until he climbed up a tree, then shot him dead.

The April incident is only the latest in a string of extrajudicial killings by vigilantes for blasphemy, which is punishable by death under Pakistani law.

And it helps explain the depth of feeling over the disputed charges that US interrogators flushed a Koran down a toilet in Guantánamo Bay – charges that have sent shock waves throughout the Muslim world.

In Afghanistan, the allegation that appeared in *Newsweek* magazine triggered several days of anti-American rioting that left 15 dead and scores injured. Protests were also held in Pakistan, Indonesia, and other Muslim countries.

The magazine has subsequently expressed regret over the report after the source, an unnamed senior US government official, expressed uncertainty over the sources of his own information. The Pentagon, which said the original story is "demonstrably false," pledged to investigate the charges and blamed *Newsweek's* "irresponsible" reporting for the violent clashes.

But while moderate Muslims welcomed the *Newsweek* follow-up in this week's issue, experts in Pakistan say that the more extreme passions unleashed across the Muslim world are unlikely to be cooled by the doubts over the story, or by US government assurances that no desecration of the Koran would go unpunished.

The Koran has a special status in Islam that sets it apart from the way many Christians view the Bible, for instance. While Christianity's holy book is held to be divinely inspired and to have been set down by holy men, the words themselves are not considered a direct work of God.

The Newsweek report has triggered anti-US rallies in the Muslim world.

But most Muslims believe that the Koran was transmitted to Muhammad from Allah by the angel Gabriel nearly 1,400 years ago and written down precisely as Allah intended.

In practice, this is one of the reasons observant Muslims are urged to learn Arabic, since a translation is deemed no longer the precise word of God. Strict Muslims are expected to clean themselves ritually before touching the Koran. They don't allow the book to be set on the floor and, in some cases, hold that nonbelievers should not touch the book.

Here in Pakistan, extremists have harnessed the emotions surrounding this and other "blasphemy" cases to challenge the US-backed government in Islamabad.

"Whether it is the existence of blasphemy laws in Pakistan, or desecration of the Holy Koran at Guantánamo Bay, it benefits the extremists," says Tauseef Ahmed, an analyst in Karachi. "No doubt it is a sensitive issue for all Muslims, but extremists try to gain political mileage and fan hatred in society. It all gives new life to extremists and pushes the liberal and progressive forces into isolation."

The controversy comes as the country heads into local elections in July. With the two mainstream political parties sidelined by the government, an alliance of religious parties known as the Mutahidda Majlise Amal (MMA) has gained momentum by pushing religious hot buttons. The group has supported extremists who have disrupted mixed-gender marathons in Gujarnwala and last weekend in Lahore. At protests this spring, MMA leaders attacked President Pervez Musharraf's policy of "enlightened moderation" as a move away from Islam and toward the US.

Now, the group is leveling similar charges following the Guantánamo controversy and a recent Washington Times cartoon that depicted Pakistan as a dog and the US as its master. Previous news articles have included accounts of US interrogators desecrating the Koran at Guantánamo.

"By insulting the Koran, they have challenged our beliefs," said Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, a top official of the religious alliance, at a rally in Islamabad. "It has happened due to the liberal and progressive policies of Western-influenced Muslim rulers."

Recently a group of Afghan clerics vowed to call for a holy war against the US in three days unless it handed over the military interrogators reported to have desecrated the Koran. The same day, MMA president Qazi Hussain Ahmed announced plans for a global protest on May 27 involving 25 leading Islamic organizations including Hamas, Hizbullah, PAS of Malaysia, and the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt.

As part of its "enlightened moderation" policy, Pakistan has tried to amend or abolish a number of religious ordinances, including the blasphemy laws. But Islamabad has backed down after opposition from religious parties.

More than 4,000 blasphemy cases have been registered since the laws were enacted in 1986, according to human rights activists. While no one has ever been officially executed for blasphemy, dozens have been killed by vigilantes.

"That should be prosecuted vehemently. Only the government can take a person's life," says Ghafoor Ahmed, the deputy chief of Jamaat-i Islami, a major component of the MMA. Still, the blasphemy laws are necessary, he says. "No one who believes in God or in the prophets of God can allow them to be insulted."

Campaigners against blasphemy laws in Pakistan say there are inadequate protections for the accused, who under current law must be arrested before any investigation begins. Often lower court judges are intimidated into passing a guilty verdict. If challenged, it takes years for the upper courts to review to verdict. In the meantime, blasphemy prisoners are vulnerable to violence. Those who are eventually acquitted sometimes must flee the country.

Blasphemy cases rarely involve malice against Islam. Rather, the charges are often pretexts rising out of petty issues ranging from cattle theft to land disputes. They are also used as a weapon against religious minorities, says Shabaz Bhatti, head of the All Pakistan Minority Alliance.

Last November, a Christian girl in the small town of Wah Cantt was accused of blasphemy after someone spotted pages of the Koran in a trash bin outside the house where she was cleaning.

Before the police could investigate, extremists attacked the house and threatened to kill her. Muslim and Christian elders intervened and handed the girl to the police in a bid to save her life, locals say. She was released, but the death threats continued, forcing her and her family to leave.

"We still feel that we are living under danger, under a shadow of a fake accusation," says a relative of the girl. "We have lived with our Muslim brothers for decades. They respect our beliefs and we respect their beliefs, except there are some extremists who want to ignite feelings on the basis of baseless allegations."

• Dan Murphy in Cairo contributed to this report.

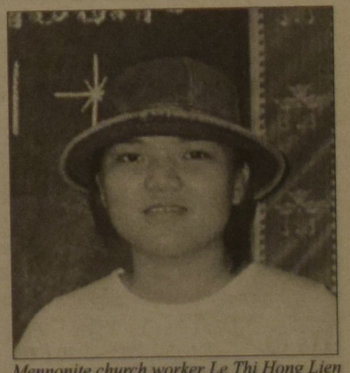
Court denies Mennonite pastors' appeal

(Compass) — The Presiding Judge upheld the three-year sentence of the Rev. Nguyen Hong Quang and the two-year sentence of Evangelist Pham Ngoc Thach at an appeal court hearing on April 12. On the morning of the trial, various police units dressed in riot gear were stationed at the courthouse compound. Around 200 Christians came to the courthouse to show solidarity with the Mennonite prisoners by holding a silent prayer vigil. On April 11, Mrs. Quang was summoned to the District 2 police station and scolded for writing and circulating an urgent appeal to Christians everywhere to fast and pray for justice to be done for her husband and the other Mennonite prisoners.

Vietnam released Mennonite church worker Le Thi Hong Lien, 22, two months short of completing her one-year prison term. Agence France-Presse quoted a European diplomat in Hanoi announcing that Ms. Lien would be among a group of 7,751 prisoners to be granted a special amnesty on April 30. An American diplomat confirmed the news to a representative of the Vietnam Mennonite Church.

Two months ago, Lien, who taught children's Bible classes prior to her arrest, was transferred to the Bien Hoa Mental Hospital to receive treatment for the effects of prison torture. According to visitors who saw her there, her body shows signs of severe abuse and she has difficulty using her jaw, which was broken by beatings.

After just two days of freedom, however, Lien, was again picked up by the police. A "work team" of about 30 local officials came to the residence, which serves as a meeting place for the Vietnam Mennonite Church in Ho Chi Minh City. When Mrs. Quang, wife of imprisoned pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, went out to talk to them, a number of police officers pushed their way past her into the house, loudly demanding that all religious activity cease. They ordered everyone to the ward police station for interrogation. A particularly abusive officer said he had orders to harass the Christians until they no longer went to the Quang house to worship.


Mennonite church worker Le Thi Hong Lien

Lien remained silent throughout the interrogation, even though she was threatened with force. She was released at about 10:30 p.m. along with others of the group. She reportedly returned to the Quang home exhausted and terrified.

Christian businessman in India charged with conversion

Christian relief groups working with tsunami victims also challenged

Vishal Arora

NEW DELHI (Compass) – An Indian court has charged a Christian businessman in southern Kerala state with attempted conversion.

Mr. Vidya Sagaran, a businessman from Kayamkulam Taluka was arrested by local police on March 30, defense attorney Ranjit George told Compass, and was granted bail the next day.

"The complainant, Mr. Vishwanathan Pillai, accused Sagaran of inducing him to convert from the Nayar caste [a Hindu sect] to the Pentecostal faith.

Sagaran was charged under a section of the Indian Penal Code that deals with criminal trespass, promoting feelings of religious hatred, and causing grievous hurt.

States that do not have an anti-conversion law can use this section to charge those accused of "forced" or "fraudulent" conversion. It states, "Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, promotes or attempts to promote, on grounds of religion, disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious groups, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to three years, or with fine, or both."

Pillai alleged that Sagaran lent him 1,000 rupees ($250), which he claimed was a bribe to encourage him to convert. According to Pillai, Sagaran later entered Pillai's house and demanded the return of the money because Pillai had not converted to Christianity.

However, the lawyer George explained that Sagaran, who is Pillai's neighbor, was the mediator for a money transaction between Pillai and a third party. "It seems Sagaran took money from the third party and gave it to Pillai. Then when Sagaran went to ask for the money to be returned, Pillai accused him falsely."

George also said Hindu activists may have encouraged Pillai to file this complaint. "The local Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a radical Hindu group, was not happy with Sagaran because he accepted Christianity about four years ago from a Hindu background, and was attending the Emmanuel Mission church in Kayamkulam. He was allegedly being asked to return to Hinduism.

"I think the case will not even reach the stage of collecting evidence, as there is no basic case against my client. The case is fabricated," George added.

Christians account for almost 20 percent of Kerala's population of 31.8 million. However, Kayamkulam is predominantly Hindu, with only three small churches – including the Emman-uel Mission church attended by Sagaran.

In recent weeks, Hindu activists have objected to the work of Christian relief groups – including Emmanuel Mission – in tsunami-torn coastal areas of Kerala.

As Sajan K. George, national convenor of the Global Council of Indian Christians, told Compass, "Emmanuel Mission is engaged in the rehabilitation of affected people with a proposal for an orphanage. However, the RSS and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) are trying to discredit the rigorous work carried out by Christian organizations."

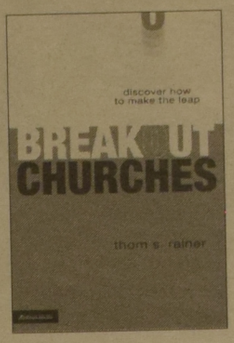
For example, "The Hindu group Aikyavedi recently objected to tsunami rehabilitation projects run by Christians in Kollam district," Sajan George said.

The general secretary of the Aikyavedi, accused Fr. Rajesh Martin, director of the Kerala Catholic Youth Movement, and Fr. J. Francis, Latin Catholic president of Kerala ... of conversions.

Both Catholic priests were involved in large-scale rehabilitation work.

Varghese Thudian, state coordinator for Emmanuel Mission, confirmed that "the RSS is very strong in Kayamkulam district, and incidents of persecution are common.

How do churches breakout?



In his new book (Zondervan), Thom Rainer and his research team examined more than 50,000 churches in the U.S. to identify those characteristics that help a church "breakout" and make the leap from good to great. The project was inspired by the best-selling business book *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. They identified 13 churches which had made a major positive shift without a change of leadership. In the process they discovered several things that were not present in such "breakout" churches:

The pastor involved in the transition was not leading by the sheer force of a charismatic personality. . . .

The breakout churches were surprisingly slow in adopting new methodologies and latching on to the latest and hottest trends in the national church scene.

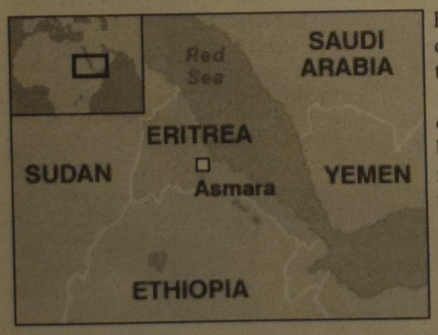
A deliberately created and clearly articulated vision statement had little or nothing to do with the breakout to greatness. . . .

The name of the church and any decision to remove or keep the denominational identity was not a factor in breaking out. . . .

The breakout churches were conservative theologically, but the comparison churches were almost as conservative. Our earlier studies confirmed the importance of clear doctrine in evangelistic churches, but doctrine alone does not move churches to greatness.

So what does move churches to greatness? Among the factors Rainer cites: a bold, passionate leader who "is willing to take incredible steps of faith and make the tough calls that few others will;" leaders who "seek to equip others for the work of ministry while deflecting recognition for themselves;" an "environment of excellence;" and much more.

Nearly 900 Christians in jail in Eritrea



LOS ANGELES (Compass)

In April, 16 full-time pastors were among nearly 900 Eritrean Christians known to be jailed in local prisons, military confinement camps and shipping containers for daring to meet secretly for prayer and worship outside government-sanctioned churches.

Despite a heavy-handed clamp-down by Eritrea's security police, evangelical sources in the tiny northeast African nation have managed to compile a documented list of 883 Christians now being held without trial or charges because of their faith.

Only a handful of prisoners have been released – after recently being coerced to sign pledges to stop attending religious services of the un-registered, "illegal" denominations.

In an interview April 5 with Agence France-Presse (AFP), the director of the Eritrean President's office, Yemane Gebremeskel, claimed that arrested members of the banned Christian groups "are maybe held for five hours and then let off with a warning." He also accused human rights groups criticizing Eritrea's violations of religious freedom of getting their information off the internet and giving "arbitrary figures."

Compass confirmed the names of 16 pastors currently under arrest in three prison locations in Eritrea. The imprisoned clergy include eight Full Gospel Church pastors and three clerics from Medhane Alem, a Sunday school movement which is part of the Orthodox Church.

Four of the pastors, all of whom are married with children, have been jailed incommunicado since last year.

Of the 12 other pastors and hundreds of church members arrested since January of this year, most were apprehended either at prayer meetings in homes of fellow believers or while attending wedding ceremonies. Several others were picked up individually from their homes or offices.

Local Protestant sources confirm that 11 months after her arrest, popular Christian singer Helen Berhane from the Rema Church is still incarcerated at Mai Serwa. Berhane has been alternately held in a metal container or locked in solitary confinement in an underground cell as officials attempt to force her to renounce participation in banned Christian services.

For the past three years, the Eritrean government has refused to register any of the nation's fast-growing independent Protestant churches, insisting that only three Christian denominations – the Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran churches – enjoy government recognition along with Islam.

Meanwhile, sources within Eritrea disputed the government's recent announce-ment before an international forum that the Adventist Church's registration application was nearing completion.

The head of Eritrea's delegation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights' (UNCHR) meeting in Geneva declared on April 5 that his government was in the process of granting official recognition to the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Shipping containers, such as these, have frequently been used to hold Christian prisoners, including Helen Berhane

60th Anniversary

A CC rally, comic books, the school struggle, the CLAC and the Tower of Babel

Harry der Nederlanden

Those of you participating in the Sea-to-sea bicycle trip celebrating the 100th anniversary of the CRC should know that almost 50 years ago *CC* sponsored an historic rally. It didn't go quite from sea to sea, but it found people from Guelph, Ajax, Hamilton and Toronto converging on Brampton on June 2, 1956. The participants weren't expected to raise $10,000 either; the entry fee was $1.25 (an hour's pay) and that covered a free meal served in Brampton.

According to the front page story in *CC* June 8, 1956, the turnout was much larger than anticipated so that the organizers had to scramble to accommodate everyone. The rally was covered by the radio station CHUM which broadcasted the event all over Ontario. About 400 people ended up in Brampton, where they enjoyed a special program. One of the highlights of the evening was a news film provided by KLM.

(Don't let your kids read this. A rip-snorting event that attracted lots of young people – in which the highlight is a news film!? Their esteem for you will drop at least 30 points – guaranteed.)

The participants spent from 3 to 5 hours touring the lovely Ontario countryside in their automobiles, reporting at various stations and finding a specific landmarks. There were even prizes – including a model airplane and a windshield washer (installation free). My first car didn't have a windshield washer either and I was ticketed in Michigan. The justice of the peace let me off, however, after I promised to install one of those new-fangled devices.

The appearance of the first issue of *Church and Nation* was announced in *CC*, June 8, 1956: it was a publication to promote reformed faith and action in Canada. The editor was Marten H. Woudstra, a professor at Calvin College. So alongside of *CC*, there was *The Banner*, *De Wachter* and in Ontario *Home and Family* to serve the CRC community. I suspect there may also have been a few who subscribed to the *Torch and Trumpet* and the *Reformed Journal*, for I recall browsing through back issues of those two magazines in the Dordt College library in 1962.

The new publication was launched because *CC* was reluctant to focus too much on churchly matters in its pages. Those kuyperians were very aware of the boundaries between various spheres.

The same issue of CC that printed this picture of the new Alberni CRC also reported that the man called by Alberni to be its pastor had been rejected by Classis after being examined by synodical delegates. No further explanation is given. With a dire shortage of ministers, some churches were calling ministers from other denominations.

50 years ago *CC* was in its 10th year and had almost 4000 subscribers at $3 per year. A letter from Classis Alberta asked *CC* to print more news from the west and encouraged those in the west to submit more news.

In October, 1955, the subscription price was boosted a whole dollar. An entire editorial in the Sept. 23 issue was devoted to explaining why. The paper needed a full-time editor. The editorial, however, neglected to say who that would be.

The letter also asked every Immigration Society to appoint an agent to peddle *CC* and encouraged every church to urge people to subscribe in their bulletins. Nowadays that would be considered a violation of sphere sovereignty, wouldn't it?

The June 8 issue reported that an attache with the Dutch consulate greeted the 120,000th Dutch immigrant to Canada in the post-war years. He arrived on the Groote Beer. Actually the ship carried 527 Dutch immigrants, each and every one of whom had a right to be designated as the 120,000th immigrant.

In 1955 the average Dutchman consumed one pound of chicken per year, while the average American consumed 30 pounds of chicken minus the feathers. What were those Dutchmen eating instead? Rabbit? Herring? Cheese?

An editorial in *CC* May27, 1955 by K. Hart warns that because of television and comic books, "the image is displacing the word. Shakespeare is losing out to Charley Chaplin." (Wait a minute, wasn't Shakespeare a dramatist? He didn't so much expect people to read his plays as to see them.)

He quotes a Prof. Woodside, from the University of Toronto: "Future historians will characterize the 20th century as the time when people stopped reading and began looking at pictures."

Hart warns against a loss of depth if image replaces word. In fact, he puts it more strongly – the person who swaps the word for the image violates God's creation order and does irreparable harm to himself.

Woodside warned that television and comics robbed children of the capacity to see trash for what it is. Today even many professors no longer distinguish "high" culture from popular culture, and are as apt to take television and comic books into their purview as Shakespeare.

But, says Hart, "the Creator endowed us with the wonderful capacity to convey our thoughts to someone else in words. It is this powerful medium that makes fellowship among humans possible."

Every civilization, he argues, has reached the height of its development in and through the word, "whether spoken or sung, scientific or artistic, in novel or in poetry. This is how the thoughts of philosophers, thinkers and poets were conveyed to the people."

Oh-oh, you're thinking, he forgot the preachers. No, he ends his reflections in a subsequent issue by affirming the centrality of the preaching of the word in the worship service.

Our leaders 50 years ago were already talking about issues that are on very current nowadays. In fact, I believe the previous editor of *The Banner*, John Suk, is making this the focus of his studies.

For sale in Medicine Hat, Alberta. A 160 acre farm, 40 acres of which are pasture. A good 5-room house, barn and other buildings and a well. Price $8500. But you had to have a $4000 down payment. If you wanted to buy a dairy between Listowel and Drayton in Ontario, however, you needed a $7000 down payment, which I assume is less than half the purchase price. The realtor doesn't list the full price.

The price of $8500 doesn't sound like much, but in 1955 many were making less than $2500 per year in wages.

"No peace with injustice" says Eisenhower, according to front page story in *CC*, Sept. 9, 1955. He told the Big Four meeting in Geneva that America was on a *crusade for peace*, but the desire for peace may not accept the injustice of the Soviet Union over toward satellite nations. Such a peace would only perpetuate injustice and harbor the seed of future conflicts.

It's good that Eisenhower talks about the oppression of people on a huge scale, says the *CC* correspondent, for accepting the status quo is not genuine peace. The desire to avoid war can prompt us to silently tolerate existing injustices, said Eisenhower. Besides, he added, we would be doing violence to our conscience, for in the eyes of those bowed by injustice we would be allied with the oppressor.

Nevertheless, to those under Soviet slavery these words give little comfort, says the *CC* article. His speech did, however, pull those up short who are willing to sacrifice too much for peaceful coexistence.

If talk of crusades sounds contemporary, here's another article (Sept. 30, 1955) that sounds a familiar theme. "How fast are the oceans rising because of melting polar caps?" asked the writer 50 years ago. A group of scientists were visiting Greenland to continue work begun in 1946 and 1948 to measure the rate that the Greenland ice cap was shrinking.

The ice caps were thought to be adding 1000 cubic km of water to the oceans every year, raising the sea level 2.6 mm. The Dutch were biting their nails.

Don't cry for me Argentina! The Oct. 7, 1955 headlines celebrate the overthrow of Argentina's dictator Juan Peron by the military and huge anti-Peron demonstrations. The article says hopefully now Argentina will have a more peaceful and more democratic government. The new president Lonardi was sworn in and greeted enthusiastically by a crowd of half a million people.

Alas, he didn't last very long, and Argentina struggled in vain to establish a stable democratic government, even calling Peron back from exile in Spain in the 70s.

Someone who signs with the initials J.W.F.U. (Uitvlucht?) once

Ad for baby buggies promoting Christian schools

Profit and Loss

again writes about the school struggle (schoolstrijd). It's a struggle for our rights with the government, he says. It's also a struggle to do our duty, a duty that extends beyond our own horizons. We fight for our rights for our own schools and we fight to do our duty to make them as good or better than public schools.

But the biggest struggle, he reminds *CC* readers, is against ourselves – against our old nature, against our own materialism, against our own lukewarmness and laxity, against our selfishness. "We must once again learn to see the antithesis clearly.... We have strayed so far that we have forgotten our roots. We have strayed so far that in our daily lives there is little difference between those who serve the Lord and those who don't."

He counsels us to spend less time pointing out the superficiality of others and more time on our knees: "For it is only God's grace that will save us from going down a road that in two or three generations will end up in the same Christian bog of superficiality."

This photograph advertising the movie The Pony *is the first mention of movies I've come across in CC – other than to condemn them. A sign of liberalization? Or was the editor just taken by the photo of a girl on a galloping horse?*

The CLAC held its second annual meeting on April 30, 1955, reported *CC*. The General Secretary F. P. Fuikschot reported that the number of locals had grown from 32 to 51 over the past year. And the treasurer reported how hard it was to collect dues and contributions.

The speaker at the annual meeting was Prof. Stanford Reid of the University of Guelph. He stressed that the Kingdom of God isn't just something in the future, but it must also be at work in the present – not in an explosion of power but like yeast, working quietly to leaven the whole. Such work may not turn others into Christians, he said, but God wants us to work according to the guidelines of Scripture. If we do, sometimes we will be surprised at the results.

As the CLAC was trying to organize new locals, it learned of the fusion of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Together they represented a total of 15.3 million workers.

Writing in *CC*, Peter Speelman commented that this huge monopoly of labor had the future of North America in its hands. He said the whole enterprise reminded him of the Tower of Babel – "Something that will result in nothing."

He posed the question: "Is it still possible, with God's help, to apply Christian principles to the socio-economic life of this country?" Whether possible or impossible, he replied, it is an essential part of being-a-Christian (christenzein).

The gift of loss

Lynn Marie–Ittner Klammer

For some reason it's the light I remember most. It was nighttime outside, and the lights were dimmed in the room – not daylight, not night, but something in between, like we were caught in a transitory space between the two. It was in this unreal, dimly lit room that I lost a future with my grandfather. He was gone, leaving only the memories of a thirteen-year-old girl to sustain my love for him into the rest of my life.

As the years went by, I experienced more losses. When I was fourteen and my dog, (my life-long companion) died, I railed at the unfairness of it. When my friend from high school moved away, I asked why she had to be taken away from me. When my family moved to a different town I felt the loss of the only home I had ever known, and couldn't understand how anything good could come of it.

These, and many other kinds of loses through the years came and went, until I became a parent and now also felt my children's losses as keenly as my own. It was when my husband and I worried about our son's hurt feelings over being excluded from a game by his friends, that I heard myself saying words that I had said many times, but never truly listened to before. I asked my husband (and myself) what kind of person Matthew would be if we sheltered him from all pain. I knew that as much as it hurt me to allow it, it was pain that would help to define Matthew as a person as much as joy. Matthew needed it. He needed to learn to deal with the pain if he was to be molded into who he was meant to be.

It occurred to me in that moment that all those loses in my life were not really losses. Yes, I had suffered the pain of loss, but I had also reaped the gain of my suffering. Each experience had added to who I was inside, how I could relate to others, and the choices I made for my life. The loses in my life propelled me toward the future. They were part of God's plan to lead me to being an effective therapist, an understanding friend, and loving wife and mother. I understood my child's pain because I remembered my own. I could help the bereaved widow of a friend because I had experienced the loss of a loved one myself. When a patient descended into depression after the death of her pet poodle, I was able to empathize where others couldn't. The losses of my past were integral threads woven into the tapestry of my life. Without them, the fabric would unravel. They were as necessary as the joys, as integral to who I was as the happy times. From each I learned about the pain of humanity. Each brought me closer to understanding my fellow man and gave me the empathy to reach out to others. They were necessary if I was to fulfill God's plan for my life.

When I think of the Bible stories about Jesus, it's clear to me that suffering is valuable in it's own unique way. Jesus found joy in life, but he also suffered too. It was his suffering in fact that was the critical point of his being here on Earth with us. His suffering resulted in ultimate good. His suffering was a gift to all of us, just as our suffering is also a gift from him, and to others.

The next time you're in pain, or suffering the loss of a loved one, try to remember the purpose of your anguish. Pain hurts, but through it comes understanding and strength, empathy with our fellow man, and a closeness to God. It's a defining principle of who we are and who we are to become. It makes us human. It makes us alive.

Cambodia pitches sweat-free wear to appeal to consumer conscience

Simon Montlake

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

After a quick snip of the scissors and a double-stitch to attach the label, Om Chantoen flings the finished black blouse into a red plastic tray, then fishes another from the stack beside her workbench at a garment factory here.

With overtime, Miss Om brings home $70 a month. She's seen the price tag that goes on these US-bound shirts: $40.

"I used to wonder how people could pay so much for these shirts," she says, laughing at the question. "But I realize the factory has to make a profit."

But keeping Cambodia's garment factories profitable in the face of global competition isn't easy. Oeung Samol, the supervisor at Archid Garment Factory, says orders are down sharply this year and about 100 of 700 workers have been laid off. Like other manufacturers, he blames the downturn on surging Chinese exports following the abolition of a decades-old quota system on January 1.

Prodded by domestic textile companies, the European Union has joined the US government in launching an investigation into the sharp rise of garments from China that could trigger import curbs. But analysts say long-term trends in the garment trade favor large producers like China and India, as buyers place bigger orders and demand lower prices.

That leaves small garment producers like Cambodia, which ships most of its output to the US, facing potential ruin, as the industry employs 65 percent of its manufacturing workforce.But Cambodia may have a trick up its sleeve. In an industry often accused of exploiting sweatshop labor, Cambodia says it offers the opposite: unionized workers paid fairly in safe conditions. Regular inspections by a third-party watchdog keep managers on their toes and give companies with a conscience an incentive to buy Cambodian.

The monitoring is the result of a 1999 US-Cambodia trade deal that rewarded garment exporters who improved labor conditions. It's a model that some say could be adapted by other countries seeking to stay ahead of cutthroat competition under the new trade laws.

"If I was a developing country trying to promote my textile industry, I'd be finding ways to say, 'look, we also have this advantage [of high labor standards].' It's been shown that buyers do respond to this," says Sandra Polanski, a former State Department official who helped negotiate the Cambodia trade pact and now works at the Carnegie Endowment.

Proponents point to a World Bank survey of international buyers in 2004 that ranked Cambodia above its competitors in terms of its treatment of workers. More than 60 percent of companies who sourced Cambodian apparel said compliance with labor standards was of equal or greater importance than price, quality, and speed of delivery.

The reason: 86 percent of the buyers reckoned that labor standards mattered to their customers, underscoring the risk to retailers of being called out by anti-sweatshop activists. Among the brands sourcing Cambodian garments are Gap, H&M, and Levis.

But garment factories here must still compete on price. "You've got to be in the game to play. If you're not price-competitive, then you're not even in the game," says Magdi Amin, a regional private-sector development specialist at the World Bank in Washington.

Wages make up about 15 percent of the cost of Om's $40 shirt. What hobbles small countries are the price of importing cotton and other fabrics and the rickety infrastructure that slows delivery

Continued on page 15...

Remembrance

The Hunger Winter of 1954: a night on the road

In the last episode, the Jongsma family struggled to start their journey from The Hague to Friesland.

The road was quite busy by now. People with push carts and baby buggies and all sorts of homemade modes of transportation were out in search of something to eat for their families. We stood still awhile trying to catch our breath and watching the misery passing us by.

Three policemen from The Hague came along with a handcart, two pushing and one pulling with a rope. We asked them if Henk could ride on the handcart for a while to lighten the load for my wife Ankje. The men, out looking for food for their families, showed us no compassion, however, and flatly refused.

Several people caught up to us, one riding a carrier bike, and he agreed to give Henk a ride. So we resumed our bicycle journey. However, the bulge on Ankje's rear tire grew larger and larger, finally forcing her to stop.

Meanwhile we were close to Waddixveen and it was 12 noon by my watch. Near a large bridge which had been bombed a few times, we once again examined the tire. The diagnosis was bad: there was no way we could continue our journey on that tire. We had to come up with an idea. The first hours of our journey had not been encouraging. We couldn't go on, but neither could we go back, for there was nothing to eat at home.

Near the bridge there was a small café attached to a farm. There we decided to eat a few of the slices of bread we had taken along while we discussed what we should do. We had no doubt that we were in a bad fix, but we were also sure that we had no choice but to continue. We had to find some other way to travel.

After much shilly shallying, we concluded that we had to continue on foot; however, that meant we could not take along everything we had packed. At last we agreed that Ankje and the three children would remain in Waddixveen while I returned to The Hague by bicycle to fetch the baby buggy and the children's wagon.

After briefly consulting with the café owner, whom we took into our confidence, we unloaded our bikes and were allowed to store our baggage in her living room for the time being.

It was almost 6 p.m. before I got back to the city. The city was just coming under air attack and the sirens were screaming. Riding was strictly forbidden. Finding shelter in a doorway, I waited until the all clear was sounded and I could get back on my bike. Soon I was again standing in front of the house we had left only that morning.

Quickly I dragged the baby buggy and the wagon out of the house, and I also took along the suitcase and filled pillow case we had left behind that morning. I put the small wagon inside the baby buggy along with the suitcase and pillow case. Getting back on my bike, I pulled the buggy along behind me with my left hand.

I had planned to spend the night in The Hague and to catch up again in the morning, but I thought I could get back to Waddixveen before curfew. So I took a chance.

By the time I reached the outskirts of the city, however, I was coming to the conclusion that it wasn't going to be easy. Pulling the buggy was hard work. And I was feeling the first signs of exhaustion.

The road was emptying of people. Although it was full moon, it was becoming quite dark. I stopped to tie the buggy to the rear carrier of the bike, hoping that would make riding easier, for I was becoming very tired.

But it soon became obvious that this was no solution, for the buggy began swerving back and forth across the road so that I could hardly steer. It wasn't long before the whole business spilled across the road. With my remaining strength I got everything upright again and once again went back to pulling it behind me with my left hand.

Soon, however, I could go no further and all I could do was stretch out on the side of the road and go to sleep. After lying there awhile, the moon came out from behind the clouds and in the distance I spotted a cluster of buildings.

My mind told me, "You can't keep lying here; get up and find some shelter over there."

Fighting despair and reluctance to move, I once again picked up my bike and buggy and stumbled in the direction of the houses.

Coming to the first house, I rang the doorbell and asked for some space on the floor where I could spend the night. My plea, however, was rejected. The door closed and I was left standing outside.

A little farther along the road stood a farmhouse. Once again I tried my luck. Although there was light burning inside, no one responded to my repeated rings.

Discouraged, I left the farm. A short distance further there was another farmhouse. In the meantime, it was past curfew, so I had no choice but to try again.

The door was opened by a young house maid, to whom I quickly explained my situation. From our short conversation, I learned that she too was from Friesland. That gave me hope, for Frisians help one another. The girl went inside and told my story to the farmer and his wife.

They obviously didn't put much stock in my story. Moreover, they had undergone some bad experiences with so-called "trekkers" (the name given to those driven by hunger to trekking along the roads in search of food). Some of them had been thieves, so the farmer was reluctant to offer me shelter.

The girl's heart, however, came to my aid, and I was given permission to spend the night in the barn with the cows. The farmer spread an armful of straw on the floor and soon I was bedded down with the cows, weariness claiming every part of my body.

About an hour later the Frisian girl came carrying a cup of hot coffee, which I eagerly accepted. Although I had not eaten since noon, I was not really hungry. But I wasn't offered anything to eat anyway.

The girl and I exchanged stories about Friesland, and we were soon joined by a farmhand, who also joined in the conversation. So I had a sociable evening until they left about 10 p.m. so I could get some sleep. But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get to sleep, wondering where my wife and kids were spending the night.

After an almost sleepless night, I was wakened early by the farmer coming to feed and milk the cows. But I had planned to get up early anyway to continue my journey to Waddixveen. Before I could leave, however, the girl surprised me by bringing me a couple of slices of bread with plenty of butter and cheese and two large glasses of milk. I had not tasted anything so good in months.

Revived and with new courage, I took to the road the same way as the previous night, dragging the buggy behind me. It was a beautiful morning and there was hardly anyone on the road yet, neither civilians nor soldiers.

About 8 a.m. I reached the place where I had left my wife and children the day before. I found out that they had spent the night at the cafe. I also discovered that we had suffered a new setback. During the night someone had stolen my wife's bicycle, which we had parked against the side of the café overnight. But we were determined to go ahead with our plans. We put the youngest Dutsina in the buggy, stuffing woolen blankets around her, the suitcases in the wagon, and once again we were ready to travel.

The sun broke through the clouds and it looked as if it would be a good day for trveling. We paced ourselves so we would not tire too quickly. Ankje pushed the buggy, and Annie and Henk pulled the little wagon. I walked my bicycle. Every so often we changed off.

About 12 noon, after we had traveled quite a ways, a large truck stopped near us. It was going toward The Hague loaded with luscious apples for the German military. We hadn't seen any apples or any other sweet fruit in months, let alone tasted any. Ankje, who could put on a pitiable face, hurried toward the truck. She managed to wheedle a few large apples from the driver, and each of us got a few bites from one of the apples. The rest were stashed away for the future. We had developed a habit of being very sparing with our food over the last few months.

There were very few homes along this major road, making the walk dreary and tiresome. There was also very little traffic. Here and there along the road we saw shot-up and burnt-out vehicles, which made us aware that traveling this road was not without danger. All day long we heard English planes high overhead.

The longer we walked, the more we became convinced that walking was very slow going. Early that morning we had thought to reach Bilt that day, but as dusk came on, we saw that we would not reach our goal. The short winter days were not in our favor.

To make matters worse, one of the back wheels of the buggy came off. I had prepared for that possibility, however, and soon had my tools out. It wasn't long before we were once again on our way.

A few kilometers farther we came to one of the few road signs, which told us that we were still 2 km from Woerden. Exhausted as we were, we decided to seek shelter for the night somewhere in the vicinity.

At the first farmhouse we came to, we were refused. The farmer directed us to the evacuation office in Woerden, an easy way to be rid of us. But we were too tired to travel much farther. So we tried again at the next farmhouse. Here too we were firmly turned away.

By this time it was almost dark, but we had no choice but to try for Woerden, even though we could hardly lift our feet.

By the time we reached Woerden, the city was dark. Here and there we spotted faint lights. After stopping again and again to ask for help, we reached a man who was the director of the evacuation office. He wasn't very friendly toward us, however, telling us that his office was not created to deal with those like us who left their homes voluntarily. It was for those who had been evicted by the German occupiers.

He told us to report to the police station, where we could sleep in the hay. That did not sound good to me. What if the local police were not to be trusted? Ankje, howeever, had reached the limits of her endurance and began sobbing.

That moved the heart of the director and he decided to make an exception and allow us to spend the night in the evacuation cen-

ter. A helpful citizen of Woerden showed us the way.

One disappointment followed another, however. We were led to an old school building that was completely dark. The only light came from a stove that spread a welcome heat as well as an eerie light through the otherwise black room.

A little straw was spread out in the corners, and a few people, in the same quandary as us, were huddled around the stove. It was shelter, but that was about all. We were miserable and uneasy, but we took out our sandwich and although we were all very hungry we ate with reluctance.

We had only taken a few bites, however, when we heard a door open and a voice said, "Will the family from The Hague with the three children please come here?"

Stumbling across desks and all sorts of other junk in the darkness, we hurried in the direction of the voice, wondering what this meant.

It was the director. He told us that he had found a place to sleep for the night with some people in Woerden. He himself guided us through the dark streets of the city, telling us underway that he had also ordered food for us from the central kitchen. I could pick it up after we reached the house.

Soon we were standing at the door of a fine-looking house. The people welcomed us so warmly and genuinely that words fail me. First they led us to a couple of beautiful bedrooms, where there were water basins, towels, and soap, so we could wash up. The generous reception made us forget our exhaustion.

After we were refreshed, our hosts led us into the dining room, where the table was set, for the family was just sitting down for supper. One of the children had been sent into town to pick up our food from the central kitchen. When it arrived, however, our host rejected it as unfit to eat and we were invited to share a delicious home-cooked meal. We ate like lumbermen. It was all incredibly delicious; moreover, we were allowed to eat until we were full – something we had not been able to do for a long time.

Our hosts were members of the Lutheran Church. After supper, the husband read a piece from the Bible and we prayed together.

The children were tucked into bed, a very fine bed, and were soon fast asleep. We sat up for awhile longer with our hosts and their older children to visit. It turned into a wonderful evening. We had ended up with people who did their utmost to make us as comfortable as they could. They were genuine Christians who understood their duty toward others. It was quite late before my wife and I finally went to bed.

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Stewardship and giving for children

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

In a survey conducted at Calgary First CRC prior to their building campaign, people were asked how they learned to give. Over 80 percent responded that they learned it from their parents, only 14 percent said from the church, the rest was from books, another church's teaching; or from other individuals. When it comes to giving, the role of parenting is critical.

The same goes for stewardship. What parent does not want their child to become a wise steward of their time, their skills and abilities, and their use and care of the earth's resources and their possessions? When it comes to stewardship, children learn from the example of their parents.

Let's consider for a moment, how do we learn? We listen to teaching or we read and study or we watch and observe how someone else does it; and then it is a matter of trying it ourselves. Just think about how you learned to ride a bicycle!

TMT: Teach, Model and Train

It may have started with someone teaching – explaining what the parts of the bicycle are for – how to grip the hand grips and place the feet on the pedals etc. Through it all I may learn a lot but I still haven't learning bicycling. Next, the person teaching me got on the bicycle and demonstrated how she did it. She modeled what I needed to learn. The demonstration helped me overcome some anxiety and sure made a lot of things clearer to me – but even so I still had not learned bicycling.

It wasn't until I got on the bicycle and tried it myself that I start to learn. Sure, I fell and even ran into the mailbox on the corner of our street, but someone was there helping me sometimes catching me, sometimes getting run over by me. But I was on the seat, my feet were on the pedals, at least some of the time and my hands were on the steering. I was in training!

In training: stewardship and giving

As the bicycle learning experience so aptly illustrates, teaching is only a beginning step. As parents, we need to agree on what our children need to learn when it comes to stewardship and giving and it's important to get started when they are still very young. We need to be deliberate about what we teach, how and what we model and we need to reflect on how we can set up training experiences for our children. Children need to learn how to make choices so that they might learn and we need to make room for wrong choices. Failure sometimes teaches more effectively than doing it right the first time. It also means that parents need to be consistently 'walking-the-talk' (practising what they teach) themselves. Consider how we can train our children to become good stewards of their time (dealing with a natural tendency to procrastinate), to develop their skills and abilities, and to practise careful and considerate concern for their use and care of the earth's resources.

When it comes to money, our children need to learn the three S's: how to *share* (they learn the joy of giving), how to *save* (learning value and delayed gratification), and how to *spend wisely* (there are many choices but we can only spend a $ once). As parents we need to consider how we will not only teach them, but also demonstrate and provide opportunities for training in these three areas.

Consider the example of Ron and Judy Blue (from his book *Master Your Money*, p.25/26) as they set out to train their children in the third "S" – spending wisely:

"Each year for Christmas I give my children two sheets of paper as a gift. On them I list the things I can do with them during the next year. Some of the options are: going out for breakfast or lunch, going to a professional baseball, basketball or football game, or going with me on one of my speaking trips. My objective is to let them pick how they would really like to spend time with me.

"It's been interesting to observe the difficulty they have in choosing which activity they really want. One that seems to be chosen frequently, is 'Spending 4 hours with me and having $25 to spend in any way you choose.'

"The first year we began this tradition my third daughter, who was nine years old at the time, picked this option and carefully planned our time together. We were to start at a large shopping mall on a Saturday morning and end with lunch. She was filled with anticipation and excitement when the day arrived.

"Picture in your mind a nine-year-old child with $25 in her hand, entering a mall with tens of millions of dollars worth of goods available to buy. The dilemma she faced is exactly the same dilemma that you and I face – there is never enough money to do or buy everything that you want. There are always more ways to spend money than there is money available. You may respond as she did.

"After shopping for just a little while, we went in a store with overpriced notions, such as crazy pens, note paper, and so on, and she selected several items – despite my caution that tomorrow they would not be nearly as attractive. I said to her, 'Karen, remember that good decision making requires a long-term perspective.' She assured me that she would use and love these items 'forever and forever.' When the bill was totaled, she had spent her $25 and we still had three hours left and lunch to buy. We ended up going home early so that she could play with her purchases.

"The very next day everything she had purchased was either used up, broken, or uninteresting. I will never forget her confessing to me that she had, in effect, responded to the emotion of the moment and, in retrospect, made a poor choice. The problem was that her money and time were both irretrievably lost.

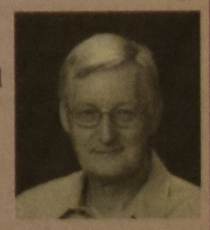
"What was not lost, however, was the experience and what it taught her. Now when I am getting ready to buy something she frequently says to me, 'Daddy, don't forget that the longer term your perspective, the better your decision is likely to be.'

Sometimes I wish that I hadn't taught her that!"

Teaching, modelling and training our children is a special trust from God. As the Proverb states, when we train our children in their youth – it lasts into old age – and is likely to have eternal significance.

– **Stewardly Tip**: If you are a parent or grandparent of a young child. Consider a gift of a special 3-compartment piggy bank that features the 3 S's. Crown ministries (519-637-0626) can supply a neat one (costs $25) that is basically a mini-street scene – a church, (share), a bank (save) and a store (spend). When a child earns something it is easy to divide up the cash to teach tithing and saving in addition to wise spending.

Readers: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.



Next issue: Endowments: A Steward's Tool to Provide Financial Stability

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Ecclesiastes

Repetition – God's faithfulness not circularity

A. A. Van Ruler

That which is has been already and that which will be has already been, for God seeks what has passed by. (NASB)

Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account. (NIV)

Note from Holman Bible:

Literally: *God seeks [the] pursued*; or *God calls the past to account*, or *God seeks what is past*, or *God seeks the persecuted*

Ecclesiastes 3:15

Here the Preacher is saying, at least so it seems by the wording, the exact opposite of what we are used to hearing in the aphorism: "The past is the germ of the present, and the present the germ of the future." By this we mean to say that there is a coherence in what happens. What exists today has emerged from the past, and what we do now determines the future. From this thought we even manage to excavate the grand truths of divine accountability and retribution and so also of human responsibility.

What we do is serious. Our deeds are woven into the tapestry of history.

By pressing these thoughts further, we soon arrive at the idea that what happens involves not only coherence but also progress. One thing issues forth out of another. Things continue in this way until the last judgment.

The thought that at some time all things will be subject to a definitive judgment is not alien to the Preacher. He most certainly does not say, however, that there is, therefore, progress in what happens. On the contrary, he says just the opposite. That which is, already has been. So when compared with the past the present delivers nothing new. And neither should we expect anything new from the future, for also that which is to be, already has been. This two-pronged saying emphatically rules out all progress in events.

However, it does not on that account rule out the element of coherence. The past, present, and future are related to each other – they are related in terms of repetition. Things repeat themselves. They return again. They appear to be part of a cycle. Reality is, then, a circle. In a circle, too, each point returns again and again.

Yet, we must be careful in developing this thought. The image of the circle does not fit easily into the context of biblical thought. The circle characterizes the life of nature, which traces the perpetual cycle of day and night and of the seasons. Biblical thought, however, views reality more from the viewpoint of history. For history, the picture of the line or of the road is much more typical than that of the circle or cycles.

Repetitions may occur along the road. But they do not recur with an inner necessity. They are genuine, deliberate repetitions.

Repetition is a very remarkable possibility. A child can listen intently to a beautiful story time and time again and wants it to be retold in exactly the same words every time. According to Kierkegaard, marriage is the permanent repetition of the first love. It depends upon the fact that the marriage proceeds in faithfulness and that this faithfulness does not become boring. Such ideas prepare us to accept the fact that many things keep recurring with great regularity every day of our lives. This repetitiveness may be broken up by a few days of vacation, but then everyday life resumes once again.

That we should view repetition this way – not as a necessary recurrence, but as a deliberate form of faithfulness – follows from what the Preacher adds: God seeks what has been driven away. It had already passed by. It was gone. In other words, it had already been replaced and succeeded by something else. But God seeks it out again. He allows it to recur.

In this way, repetition as a moment in occurring reality is seen as a deliberate act of God. He brings old things to light again and again.

Perhaps this makes it clear why the Preacher makes this observation in the context of his affirmation of purposiveness. In the preceding verses, he discussed the fact that man does not have command over the results of his own toil, in the sense that he is unable to control whether his labor will have results, or in the sense that he is unable to enjoy the results of his labor at his own inclination.

Everything has its own time. And everything is as it is. It depends exclusively on the sovereign good pleasure of God. In his freedom he causes things to appear and to be just as they appear and are.

The Preacher develops this, the basic thought of our text, a little further. He draws our attention to the fact that God in his sovereign good pleasure obviously derives joy from returning again to what once was in order to let it be all over again. This, then, is the reason why man sees so few results in all his labor. Repeatedly he encounters what already existed long ago. It looks as if all his labor has been in vain.

But if this is true, the question involuntarily arises: why does God derive such pleasure from causing the old to return. Why the repetition in occuring reality?

The Preacher does not elaborate this question further. He explicitly confesses it to be an act of God: it is God who again seeks out that which was past. But the Preacher does not allow himself to be trapped pessimistically on the treadmill of circularity. He is merely a bystander observing the acts of God. He takes note of the repetition, but he does not dwell on the question why God repeats himself so often.

We could suggest many biblical answers to this question. For example, we could say that God seeks out the old in order to vindicate it. Everything is subjected to his judgment. There are many accounts which have to be balanced. Here the meaning of repetition becomes retribution.

We could also argue that God inverts the temporal order and returns to the past in order to reconcile it. In fact, this is the luminous center of the Gospel – God can back up; he can reach that which really and actually has been done in order to, really and actually, undo it so that it has, in fact, never been done. This is the mystery of the forgiveness of our debts.

A person could also argue that God repeats things so frequently in order to show them over and over again. He himself is never satiated by created being.

And then there's the fact that it takes a long time before the reality of God's creation to really begin to sink in to us. Strange as it may seem, it does not quickly dawn on us that there is something and not nothing. This is why God shows it to us so often.

We could also argue that the Lord God repeats things so often in order to try and try again, for a great many things go awry. We are deficient partners of the Creator. This is our fault. But our Lord God does not give up. He tries again and again. The repetition in life is really the faithfulness of God. To us this means that we repeatedly get another chance.

The pictures are from the famous* **Tres Riches Heures *of the duke of Berry, the illuminated pages of which are exhibited in the Musee Conde in Chantilly. They were done by various artists between 1412 and 1416.*

Life Models

Resisting the Nazis during World War II: an interview with four Dutch resisters

Phil de Haan

Seeing the film *Schindler's List* was a pivotal moment for Rob Prince, a moment that years later has led to his own Holocaust film.

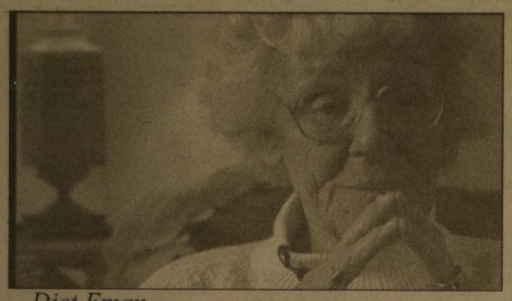
"I knew a little but not a lot about the Holocaust before Schindler's List," says Prince, a video producer for Calvin College who was a 21-year-old college student when he first saw the film. "It created in me a big desire to learn more."

That desire ultimately led to an hour-long documentary by Prince on the Holocaust and the Netherlands called "Making Choices." It aired locally on WGVU television (the West Michigan PBS affiliate) on May 5.

His film centers on the role of the Netherlands in resisting the Germans during World War II – and the country's role in saving the Jews. The documentary, which he began four years ago at the age of 24, features interviews with four West Michigan residents who were part of the Resistance Movement in the Netherlands during the war: Diet Eman, John Muller, John Timmer and John Witte.

In fact, Prince first heard Eman's story after a visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. During his time there he was astounded to learn about the significant Resistance efforts of the Netherlands during World War II.

"I'm Dutch," he says, "but I was not aware of the heroic efforts of so many in the Netherlands during the war."



Diet Eman

Wanting to know more he visited the Museum bookstore and asked if they carried any books about the role of the Dutch in the resistance movement. He was handed a copy of *Things We Couldn't Say*, the true story of Eman, who as a young Dutch woman worked with her fiancé, Hein Sietsma, to rescue imperiled Jews in Nazi-occupied Holland.

"The book tells how Diet and Hein aided the Resistance," says Prince. "Their efforts cost Diet her freedom and Hein his life. But they and their fellow Resistance members saved hundreds of Dutch Jews."

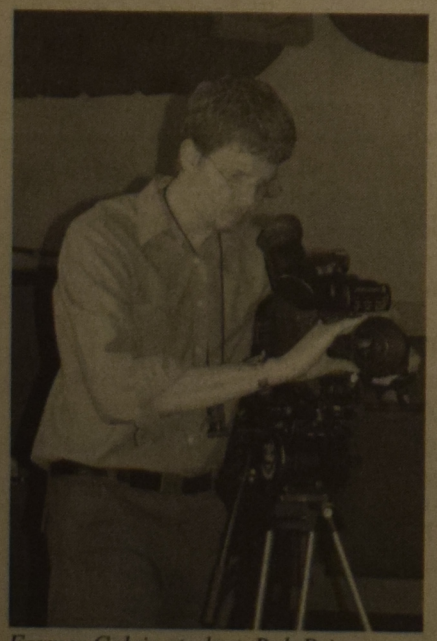
When Prince, a 1999 Calvin graduate, found out that Eman lived in Grand Rapids he sought her out and she agreed to be interviewed for what then was becoming the beginnings of his documentary. Through her and her stories he made further connections. Eventually the film became Prince's master's thesis at Michigan State University. It also became a consuming passion.

"I've spent a lot of time and a lot of money on it," he admits with a wry smile. "But it's an important topic. Near the end of the film Diet talks about making choices, making the right choices. For many years the people involved in the Resistance were reluctant to talk about what they had done. It was too hard. Now, as they enter the twilights of their lives they are more willing to tell the next generations about what they did, not for their own glory, but so that we too might consider these issues and make the right choices when we are confronted with evil."

Prince hopes to continue his work in the future, noting that he has a list of about 200 other people in North America who were in the Netherlands during World War II and were involved in the Resistance.

"Someday," he says, "I'd love to create a visual archive of their stories. I think it's a really important chapter in worldwide history and one we need to remember."

People can order either VHS or DVD via www.calvin.edu/campus-store or 616-526-6376.



Former Calvin student, Rob Prince

Tribute to a teacher

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

Recently I attended a retirement party at Brantford Christian School (Brantford, Ontario) for someone who was a teacher and principal in Christian Schools for 31 years – Mr. Christiaan (Chris) VanderVeen. There were spoken and read tributes from those young and those younger, from now-married couples who had him for a teacher, from a mother and daughter both of whom had been his students, and from relatives, children, colleagues, students and friends.

There were many stories that remarked on how the times have changed. There was mention of the strap, of days without e-mail (a notion that would be lost on kids today), of how classrooms were smaller than they are today and that expansion was a necessary event. People laughed when the pictures were shown on the screen of Mr. Vander Veen in his 1970's suit complete with pork-chop sideburns.

A number of former and current board members spoke about his love for Christian education, the school and the Kingdom vision. A brother spoke about their strong family bond and publicly stated his love. Former and current students shared with great zest stories that will be forever etched in their memories of this man – including how he would pick a not fully eaten apple out of the garbage and finish it off.

One student related that during a journal writing unit, he lamented in his journal that his brothers made fun of him due to his large ears. Mr. Vander Veen wrote back in the journal that his own brothers used to say that his ears were as big as taxicab doors. The former student said that those words truly made him feel better.

A former treasurer marveled at how calm and gentle Mr. Vander Veen always seemed – until it came time to advocate for money that affected the school's daily operation. Another former student vividly recalled grade two solely because he and his fellow students in that grade two class became interested in the snakes behind the school. When Mr. Vander Veen found out about this, he focused the science classes on these exact snakes for the next month and how they relate to God's kingdom.

There were numerous concrete examples of how the teaching and mentoring of one man lives through hundreds of people. One by one numerous individuals got up to honor this man. One by one they told of his love for his students, their gratitude for his dedication and their love for him.

When each tribute came his way, his shoulders slumped ever so slightly, signaling his humble nature. Each person was there because this man had been a great educator and mentor to others. Most people can remember their great teachers and their poor teachers. The teachers in the middle of that pack usually fade with memory. It was clear which camp this man belonged in.

For those who are or near the age of 31, thirty-one years seems like a long time to spend at the same career. Today that seems rare and distinctive. Furthermore, to spend thirty-one years pointing children of ages 5-13 towards God is admirable and faithful. It is common knowledge that Christian School teachers are not paid on an equal level with their public counterparts but I hear that the benefits package is eternal.

Shortly after listing the Ten Commandments, Deuteronomy 6:7 tells us: "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." It was obvious that those that knew this man were impressed.

So to Mr. Christiaan (Chris) VanderVeen, and others that have walked a similar path, we salute you and your faithfulness. Enjoy your retirement. Goodbye tension, hello pension.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with Marisa and their two children.

Cambodia ...continued from p.11

times. China pays higher wages, but has greater productivity as well as faster roads and ports.

Then there's corruption: according to the Garment Manufacturers Association of Cambodia (GMAC), kickbacks to government officials add between 10 and 12 percent to production costs. In response to complaints, the government has begun to cut red tape.

Still, the surge in Chinese exports is beginning to hurt. Since Jan. 1, 12 factories have closed and 24 have suspended operations, says Ken Loo, secretary general of the GMAC.

The closures have cut about 20,000 jobs and angered unionists who say workers are being denied adequate protection. Last year a prominent union leader, Chea Vichea, was gunned down in public and labor relations are often tense, with almost daily strikes.

The International Labor Organization (ILO), which monitors Cambodia's garment factories, says that while conditions are improving, some factories force workers to do overtime and underpay them. "This is not a workers' paradise. There are still violations – serious violations – of the labor law," says Ros Harvey, chief technical adviser to the ILO.

Some manufacturers remain skeptical as to whether they can leverage Cambodia's record on complying with labor standards. "Most buyers are not willing to pay more for compliance," says Loo. "There's only a select group of buyers that have come out and shown that they are willing to pay more."

On the other hand, 14 new factories have opened this year, and others are adding new lines. Among those keen to buy Cambodian is British chain Marks & Spencer. In April, New Island Co., a Cambodian supplier, opened a $1.5 million factory near Phnom Penh's airport.

Life's Journey

On Location – Did God say he was sorry?

Theresa Miedema

As some of our readers know, August in southern Alberta is hot and dry. As cattle trucks pull into and out of the yard, the dust flies and a layer of dirt settles over everything. Dust and dirt management techniques become important if you want to keep your house relatively clean. The Chief Manager at my parents' place is my mother, and she wields a mighty broom.

On one particular sunny and bone dry Alberta morning, the Chief Manager was outside tending to the plants, garden, and, yes, engaging in dirt and dust management techniques. On this day, however, she had an apprentice manager following her every move: my nephew Danny. (My sister and I, who were also visiting, were likely hiding out in the basement attempting to avoid recruitment.)

As the Chief Manager (also known as Oma) prepared to sweep the garage, the Apprentice Manager peppered her with questions: "Oma, why are you moving the car?" "So that I can sweep the garage out." "Oma, why do you want to sweep the garage out?" "Because there is a lot of dust in it and it is dirty."

The Apprentice Manager continued his barrage of questions. "Oma, why is there so much dust?" "Well, it is very dry and the trucks stir up a lot of dirt." "So, Oma, the dust comes from the dirt on the ground?" "Yes." "Oma, did God make that dust?" The Chief Manager paused for a second. "Well, yes, I guess so."

The Apprentice Manager thought about this for a moment, and then asked, "Did God say he was sorry?"

Did God say he was sorry? We may exchange wry smiles over my nephew's question, but there are likely a number of us who have wondered if God did not perhaps owe us an apology or at least an explanation at certain times in our lives. After the tsunami hit last December, many people wondered why God would allow such a thing to happen. Where is God in this?

The tsunamis in our daily life can raise similar questions. The death of a child. Paralysis after an accident. The betrayal of a spouse. A young parent diagnosed with an ever worsening debilitating disease. The angry and destructive rebellion of a teenager. Depression as deep and impenetrable as a black hole.

There are moments in our lives when we are angry and frustrated, when we cry out to God, "Why are you letting this happen? If you love us, why do you let this happen?" Sometimes the sheer injustice of it all, the unfairness of it, tears at our soul. We are burdened with the need to reconcile two truths: God loves us very deeply, yet still we suffer so much. How can this be?

We live in a broken world. As long as we continue to live under the curse, disease will continue to take our loved ones and earthquakes and tsunamis will continue to destroy cities and villages. Until the redemption of this world is complete, we will feel the effects of sin in every aspect of our lives. We will suffer–not because God has forgotten us or doesn't love us, but because we still live in brokenness.

It is true that God could intervene to save us from all of life's trials. God is sovereign and he has the power to do that. But he does not always exercise his almighty power to spare us from trouble, and I consider that there are two important points that we must bear in mind as we struggle to understand this reality.

First, God created us with the capacity to make moral choices. We choose whether to obey God or not. We make decisions, and those decisions have consequences not only for us, but also for others and for our children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren. If God were to intervene at every turn to protect someone from getting hurt, God would nullify our capacity to make moral choices. God would have to make us into something that we were fundamentally not meant to be.

There is another level to how God operates, however. There are times when God has intervened mightily in our lives. Sometimes cancer mysteriously goes into remission. Sometimes we do walk away from terrible car crashes without a scratch. These miracles happen to believers and non-believers alike. Why does God sometimes intervene and other times remain silent? Why does God cure this person, but not that person? Has one person become more worthy of intervention than another?

Absolutely not! The truth is that we cannot understand God's divine purposes. There is a dimension to God's acts that we cannot comprehend because we are merely human. We cannot expect to have the capacity to plumb the depths of God's reasoning or to anticipate the mysterious workings of God's plan. There comes a point where we must surrender and where we must be still and know that he is God.

This is the second point to remember: God's ways are divine and above our human comprehension. But God is good and loving, so we can trust that his ways are also good and loving, even if we cannot fully understand these ways in the short-term. God does not usually bless us with all the answers to why we suffer. God does, however, bless us with something far more valuable: His Presence.

We are never alone in our sufferings. We may not be spared from hardship, but we never have to contend with the weighty burdens foisted upon us all by ourselves. God is present in our reality of suffering, hurt, agony, and grief. Even more – he promises to carry our burdens for us. But we have to be prepared to let those burdens go. If we never put down the things we carry, God can never take them up for us.

Jesus Christ was human, though also fully God. While on earth, he was not spared a single discomfort of human life. On the contrary, I believe that God's plan was designed to ensure that he suffered all of the discomforts of human life. Jesus experienced physical pain. He was hungry and tired. His feet probably got blisters from time to time, not to mention his hands, as a carpenter. He was frequently surrounded by crowds of people, all wanting just a moment of his time. He certainly suffered tremendous physical agony in his death. In those last hours of his life, he spoke of his thirst, perhaps to remind us that he did not escape the physical suffering of his death. He knows physical pain of the worst kind.

Jesus experienced emotional and psychological agony as well. At one point, his family thought he was crazy and beseeched him to come home. He experienced the sorrow of a friend's death, and felt his heart go out to those suffering their own grief. He wept for the fate of Jerusalem – a city he loved that was destined for destruction. One of his closest friends betrayed him, with a kiss no less. His dearest companions deserted him – except for the one who followed at a distance, only to later deny knowing him at all. He listened to people rabidly cry out for his death – people he had healed and taught. He suffered the indignity of death of on a cross – naked for all to see, crucified between two thieves like a common criminal. He could not escape the mockery of those who gathered to gloat over his death: "He saved others. Now look at him. He can't even save himself. Pathetic."

Perhaps worst of all, Jesus experienced spiritual suffering, the degree to which no other human being has ever felt. Jesus wrestled with his spiritual destiny, knowing that his hour had come but deeply burdened at what it meant. Then there was that moment on the cross, the moment when Jesus experienced hell itself: separation from God. Never before in all eternity had the Godhead been separated. The Holy Trinity, One but Three, a Divine Community, in that horrific, hellish moment was split asunder: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?!" All of the goodness, light, holiness, and beauty of God were gone at that moment. Jesus carried the full weight of every sin, every thorn, every disease, every accident, every tsunami, every death in that one moment, radically separated from God. We have all felt the weight of our own personal sin and borne the consequences. Jesus felt the weight of the world's sin and all of the consequences. We cannot begin to imagine the horror of that one moment when Jesus carried the full weight of all sin and evil in all time and places, separated from God and from all of God's goodness and left alone with the darkness, evil, and pain.

We can never say of God, "You do not understand." Jesus, though fully God, was fully human and did not escape the reality of his circumstances. We have a God, then, that understands what it is to be afraid of death, because he was apprehensive of what he was to face. Every parent who has lost a child has a Father who watched his own beloved Son crushed without mercy. Every person who has ever been betrayed by a loved one finds a God who knows exactly how that feels. Every person who has ever suffered physical pain finds a God with scars that testify to the reality of his experience with physical suffering. Every person who has endured tremendous indignity finds a Savior who was naked before mockers. Every person who has felt abandoned and alone has a Lord who once cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

There is no depth of hell that Jesus has not already plumbed. He chose this path so that we would have an advocate in heaven who truly understands all of our suffering. God

See **Sorry** *on p. 18...*

Calvin College Coup!

Tymen Hofman

By now you've likely heard that President Bush will be the speaker at the graduation ceremonies for Calvin College's class of 2005. Mind you, the President will come to Calvin as one of just two graduation exercises he will attend this year. Almost sounds like a pure fabrication, but it is for real.

It caused a mighty buzz when it was announced in April. Almost everyone here was jubilant, especially when the details were revealed. It was not that Calvin sought him out and he accepted. It was that the White House let it be known to some local Republicans that it would look kindly upon an invitation from Calvin for the President to be its graduation speaker. Calvin's President Byker enthusiastically responded. What a coup!

Now, you would think that no one would want to rain on this parade, but think again. No sooner did the large headline appear in the *Grand Rapids Press* than the Bush haters were up in arms. They made the *Press* the same day.

One dual citizen (Canada/US) was unhappy because he disagreed with Bush's policies and thought this would signal that Calvin approved of those policies. Another was unhappy because this would be the second major Republican to grace Calvin's graduation podium, while no major Democrat has ever done so. He thought it was the Democrats' turn to speak. (Supreme Court Chief Justice Renquist spoke a couple of years back. He had been invited to speak at the January Series but requested to come when the weather was better. So he came for graduation.) Another academic "star" didn't consider the President capable of making a graduation speech he cared to listen to but he would attend to show solidarity with his students.

Who would have expected such tripe?

One wonders how this kind of material gets into print, and while there is no official explanation, rumor has it that these spoutings appeared in a Calvin faculty chat-room and someone leaked its contents to the *Press*. A dirty trick, I'd say, but it did reveal what is the mind and spirit of some Ph.D.'s. It demonstrated clearly that while academia has great knowledge to impart it often lacks the wisdom and grace that can be found in abundance in many people of much less learning. That includes the countless students who were upset by this display of political ill-will.

A young Canadian friend of mine was so angry he was prepared to write a letter to the Press. He said, "And I can't even vote, as a Canadian." The writer of the Press article didn't bother to elicit student response to the President's coming. But *Chimes*, Calvin's student publication, with a staff generally made up of young left-leaners, chimed in with its anti-Bush slants, about five articles in all.

Now all this leads to my asking some serious questions about what makes people tick politically. I'm sure I will not have the definitive answers, but would be happy to take a look at the irrationality of political loyalty. Ask the ordinary American why he is a Democrat and the answer will likely be close to this: The Democratic Party is for the poor, and the Republican Party is for the rich. A variation of this is that the Republicans are for business and the Democrats are for the laboring man. This automatically means that being a Democrat you are with Jesus – for the poor.

Now there are insightful students of American history who could go a far-piece in establishing the proposition that the Democrats love the poor so much they create many of them so they can provide endless governmental programs to keep them alive and voting Democratic. Case in point would be the scandalous Lyndon B. Johnson welfare program, which even President Clinton opted to undo with a healthy dose of realistic responsibility on the part of the poor.

So it isn't a case of simply attributing such high motives to one party while disparaging the other. There are good and loving people in both parties, likely in close to equal numbers. And in the past, in the general flow of political life, the populace has lived with winning and losing with a large amount of acceptance and grace.

But today things are different. There is on the part of a significant percentage of Democrats a visceral hatred of George W. Bush which afflicts otherwise sane and responsible people in ways that stun their Republican friends. And I am referring to fellow church members as well, some of them in my own congregation. While some do not actually hate him, they have nothing good to say about him and view his presidency in totally negative terms. Why?

The answer seems to be that they are loyal to the Democratic establishment that has developed a deep-seated loathing for the President. Some insightful pundits see three reasons for it. First, Bush is conservative. That is unacceptable to progressive America. Second, he is overtly and unabashedly Christian. He can be a Christian but let him keep his religion to himself. Third, he is a Texan, which means he is not from the elite part of the country, like New York, or Massachusetts, or California. Cowboys don't rank in the line of acceptable politicians. And he swaggers – Bush says that in Texas they call that walking. And, of course, he stole the election in 2000. He

See **Coup** *on p. 18...*

Canada encouraged R-CALF

Maynard van der Galien

There are no more positive messages from government officials and experts in the beef industry as to when the U.S. border will really open to live Canadian cattle. Everyone is certain it won't happen soon – at least not this year.

Ian McKillop, president of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, says the border to live cattle exports is likely to remain closed until 2006 because of the legal process in the U.S.

That's quite a change of tone from the last two years – the experts had the border re-opening by late summer and then by fall and then by.... Everyone was so positive. Now reality has set in.

In a column last summer I said that it's the Montana-based R-CALF ranchers who are keeping the border shut. And they've done a good job. R-CALF stands for Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America.

Most people will probably agree that the ranchers are a smart bunch of businessmen and they're lining their pockets, as their cattle prices stay high.

But could Canada have created the problem? Maybe it was our way of doing things that is responsible for creating the monster. Could it be the Canadian Food Inspection Agency? Canadian farmers haven't much respect for that government agency.

I did research on the subject and came across a speech that the former president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association gave at a beef rally in Saskatchewan. Neil Jahnke and his family operate more than 30,000 acres of land in southern Saskatchewan.

Jahnke pointed at Canada's restrictions on U.S. feeder cattle as an issue to be addressed. Jahnke said feeder cattle from the northern states can move into Canada in the winter months due to health fears over two diseases – anaplasmosis and blue tongue. However, feeder cattle from southern states aren't allowed into Canada at all. This restriction, he said, does not have a sound scientific basis. He says the border should be open year long – we owe that to the American producers.

He said it's a huge disappointment that the Canadian border has long had restrictions in the guise of disease control.

Jahnke is now the chairman of the Canadian Beef Export Association. He travels with Canadian government officials, agriculture ministers and trade groups abroad trying to sell Canadian beef. He's also a popular speaker on the speaking circuit. The 63-year-old rancher has a face you can't forget – a handlebar mustache droops down his chin. And he's not shy criticizing the federal government and especially the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

In a recent article in *Ontario Farmer*, Jahnke says the federal government could have done more to increase Canada's slaughter capacity. He took a shot at the CFIA saying, "There's been far too much red tape generated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. They have slowed all the plants; Gencor could have been up and running sooner if it wasn't for them."

Gencor Foods in Kitchener, Ontario is a producer-owned packing plant that began processing cull cows in July 2004.

The article says Jahnke feels the provincial and federal governments could find a way to take better advantage of the capacity of the provincially-inspected plants in Canada. The difference between the federal and provincial system isn't all that big, he said. Inter-provincial trade in beef processed at provincial plants should be allowed.

He is quoted in the *Ontario Farmer* article saying the organization R-CALF may well have come about because of the past difficulties U.S. producers have had in exporting cattle to Canada. "Again, the CFIA is involved, this time in how it sets protocols related to anaplasmosis and blue tongue," he said.

In the article Jahnke says there's a greater incidence of the disease in the U.S., which have led to restrictions on live cattle imports, though they are not entirely absent from Canada.

He said one of the key R-CALF members was upset that a load of cattle he had tried to deliver to Canada was turned away at the border while trucks with Canadian cattle were flowing southward.

"We created R-CALF, we're really responsible," he is quoted saying in the article.

What's that popular farmer saying? ...something about closing the barn door after the bull escaped.

Maynard van der Galien is a beef and cash-crop farmer and owns and operates The Old Towne Hall Restaurant and Tea Room in Renfrew, Ont.

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has ensured that there is not a single experience of agony that he himself has not had. When Jesus offers to take up our burdens, he knows exactly what he is offering to carry. He understands.

We have recently celebrated Ascension Day. This often missed day on the church calendar not only commemorates the return of Christ to glory, but also is a day on which we may reflect that we have an advocate in heaven who knows the burdens of human life. Jesus Christ sits on the right hand of God the Father, interceding for us. What comfort to know that our Lord and Savior advocates for us in the full knowledge of what our pain feels like! God's mercy is made even sweeter in the knowledge that it flows from a heart that has been broken in much the same way that we have felt our own hearts break.

But this is not all that God has done for us. Jesus left us with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. This is the gift that we celebrate at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit not only comes to turn the hearts of men and women to God, but also to buoy up believers. God promises to never leave us or forsake us. The Holy Spirit is the continuing presence of God in our daily lives.

We have a Father who loves us, a Savior that understands us, and the Holy Spirit to comfort and encourage us. Sometimes focusing on the question, "why is this happening" can get in the way of experiencing the comfort that is available to us. We are never left alone in our pain and suffering. God is always present and is always longing to extend his divine comfort and peace to us. Indeed, God shares our suffering. God feels grief and pain when his children suffer. Our tears are his tears. God's heart goes out to us in our grief and urges us to come to him for consolation.

Whatever your grief is today, you are not meant to carry it alone. Let God meet you where you are, for he knows every dark place where pain brings us. There is no place where grief, sin, tragedy, or sorrow can bring us that Jesus has not already visited. Let God carry you in his arms. We cannot escape the journey of tears, but we are never asked to walk that journey alone.

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really had no right to beat Al Gore.

This aversion for the President leads his foes to deny him any credit for anything he has done, even in the face an amazing array of positive developments world-wide. The capitulation of Kaddafi on WMDs, a new day in Palestinian-Israeli relations, and the totally unexpected movement in the world toward democracy where formerly tyranny was robbing people of their freedom – the liberation of Afghanistan, the astonishing election in Iraq, the victory for freedom in the Ukraine, the uprising against Syria in Lebanon, all of which would never have come to pass without George W. Bush, are sullenly ignored. He gets no respect from the dyed-in-the-wool Dems.

Early on in the war against Saddam Hussein I was arguing with a friend who was adamantly opposed to the war and to Bush. I saw the war as a very necessary though regrettable undertaking. Our discussion concluded with my asking him whether he would give the President credit for his initiative if it should turn out to be successful. He paused for a moment, and then said, "No." That left me speechless.

The anti-Bush mantra focuses in at many angles but one in particular is, "He lies." I find that beyond understanding. The plain truth is that the President has never been caught in a lie. The Iraqi-WMD claim was clearly accepted by Democrats, Republicans, the United Nations, the British, the French. Everybody believed it. There was and is no lie involved.

Ironically, George W. Bush is clearly a truth-teller, in his personal life, his daily dealings in his presidency and in his laying out his programs and making and keeping promises. He says what he means and he means what he says. In my 80+ years I have never known a politician so clearly honest. He has the fundamental Christian virtue of truthfulness to an amazing degree.

I'm very sad that for many people, their political loyalties seem to take precedence over their duty to deal fairly and in love with this devoted Christian president.

BuildingTrust

Vicky Van Andel Ed.

All the love I need

Vicky van Andel

This past year one of my dearest friends decided to write each one of her grandchildren a short story for Christmas. She wrote the stories age appropriately to each grandchild. Her grandchildren were between the ages of one and ten. Besides writing the stories she also illustrated them. The youngest grandchild's story was all of four sentences long and had drawings of enormous bright red lady bugs.

Her children were thrilled with this creative gift from their mother. They put all the stories together and informally published a little booklet entitled *All the love I need.* Suddenly last week my friend became seriously ill and died within a couple of days. The bulletin at her memorial service carried the title of the little children's book *All the love I need.* It was illustrated with the drawings that accompanied each story.

My friend will be missed in many different ways by many different people. No person can replace a mom, a grandmother, a sister or a friend. She was all of these and lived out these roles to the fullest. She was also a dedicated teacher working tirelessly to bring out the best in students. She was independent, teaching extra courses in the evenings to supplement her income so she could retire in due time. She took time for relationships, as people were important to her. She encouraged her children to treasure their friends and to develop supportive relationships. She took time to walk and talk with her own friends, and have coffee, lunch or a glass of wine with them.

Most people would be burdened by the many responsibilities she had. Though she looked forward to retirement, she never complained about her responsibilities. Instead, she journaled every day, rising early every morning to write down the things that were on her mind. She took time to pray. Her relationship with God was very alive. She had the gift of wonder. She was amazed at the unfolding of her life. She lived in the moment. She valued small things, the newly planted flowers in her yard and the letter that arrived in the mail. She quietly prioritized her time, regularly visiting children who lived far away and reading bedtime stories to grandchildren close by.

My friend had a wonderful sense of humor. Not because her life was easy but because she was gifted with an outlook that recognized paradox, irony and fun in most things. She had a great imagination and loved to read and watch movies, remembering every character and name that crossed the page or screen. She learned not to take herself seriously. "When I grow up …." She'd often say, and then burst out laughing.

Am I am describing a super woman? No, I am talking about a woman who lived her life *becoming* the woman she wanted to be (even though at her funeral one of her grandchildren was quoted as having said that his grandma "*is* an angel" after he had been told she was with the angels now). She was a woman who learned to grow through the experiences she encountered in her life.

Pain and suffering did not pass her by. But she was able to enter that pain and suffering and integrate it into her life and person. She worked hard to make choices that enabled her to move forward. In doing so she learned to distinguish between the things she valued and those that were not important.

We don't always think about what is most important in life. We get preoccupied with the rush of keeping our lives together, raising the kids, keeping appointments, cleaning house, buying groceries and going to work. In our free time we visit friends.

But unexpected life events can put a sudden stop to that busy life and force us to evaluate where we going. That life event can occur by way of a loss, the death of someone we love, the break-up of a relationship or a sudden illness. No one escapes losses in life. The older we get the more losses we experience. Ask any old person.

These losses force us to adapt to a new reality. A reality that is painful. Though we might try to escape for a while eventually it forces us to change, to integrate what happened. Life is no longer the same. So we grow, and develop a new perspective in life.

My friend knew about loss and grew through them. She was a very human person. Her journey in life was not smooth. It had obstacles and byways. Sometimes she'd sigh and say with a twinkle in her eye: "If it hadn't been for Adam and Eve and the apple on the tree…." Then she'd laugh and count her blessings.

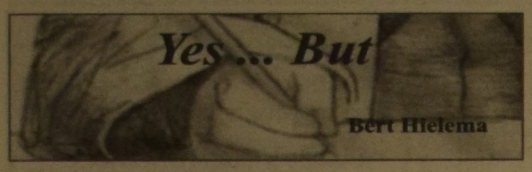
During my education I became interested in the nursing model of *Human Becoming* by Rosemary Parse. It talks about three themes as it applies to life. They are meaning, rhythmicity, and transcendence. In Parse's words, people make meaning of their lives by co-participating in creating what is real for them through living out their values in a chosen way. Life has a rhythmic pattern in which each moment has movement of opposing forces in it. Transcendence means to live in the here and now and forge a unique personal path amidst change and ambiguity.

To me those words mean that we live in a world of change, and that we grow as human beings by rising above life's challenges to become who we are meant to be. As Christians we also know that we do this with the help of God and to God's glory and honor, for the purpose of serving others and being a blessing.

The model of *becoming* fits the life of my friend. She lived well, and in doing so received all the love she needed and was able to give that love to others. She experienced challenges in life, overcame them and became who she was meant to be. My friend came full circle in her life. She is a woman to emulate. Her memory is a blessing.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at : vickyv@telus.net

Opinion



The prophecies of Saint Malachy and Saudi Oil Shock

The word 'oil' has an interesting pedigree. It originates in early Greek, where the word 'elaia,' means 'olive tree, or olive.' From there it took the meaning of its juice: olive oil.

The Romans borrowed that word and gave it a Latin twist, making it into 'oliva' or 'olea,' with the neuter variation becoming 'olivum' or 'oleum.' Petroleum means 'oil from the rock.' From there it became part of our Western languages: 'olio' in Italian, 'olie' in Dutch, 'oel' in German, 'huile' in French, all basically pronounced the same. I'll come back to 'oil' later via a very curious detour.

In 1998 a John Hogue wrote a book – 25,000 copies sold, now out of print – with the intriguing title, *The Last Pope. The Decline and Fall of the Church of Rome. The Prophecies of Saint Malachy*. If you may wonder what this got to do with 'oil,' read on. Supposedly this Saint Malachy set out in 1139 from Ireland – of course he was Irish – to Rome. Quite a trip in those days.

On sighting the Eternal City he fell to the ground and began murmuring phrases, a catalogue of slogans in Latin alluding to the reign of every Pope from 1143 until "the end of time." These utterances appeared in a list of papal labels called the "Prophecies of Saint Malachy" (*Prophetiae Sancti Malachiae*).

On this list John Paul II is Number 110 and described as "De Labore Solis," which means 'All about the labor of the Sun.' And indeed he always did his work in the light of world-wide publicity. The new Pope, Benedict XVI, elected on 2005 April 19, is Number 111, and is the one but last pontiff on this list, which ends with 'Petrus Romanus.'

"The Glory time of Oil"

This last Holy Father, like the first Peter, will reign in a time of persecution and dreadful happenings of an undefined nature, which will include the destruction of the "seven-hilled city" (usually associated with Rome, but which could easily represent the entire Western civilization.)

The prophecies assign to Benedict XVI the mysterious label of "De Gloria Olivae," translated literally as "About the Glory of the Olive," which makes little sense today.

What does make sense is – and here endeth my detour – to connect 'De Gloria Olivae' to oil. After all 'Oliva' means 'Oil'. Thus "De Gloria Olivae" might then be viewed as the "the Glory time of Oil" or "Peak Oil". In other words, the reign of Benedict XVI could see the occurrence of Peak Oil.

Suppose this is true. There is increasing talk of Peak Oil. *The Economist* devoted its May 9 issue to Oil and went to great length to assert that Saudi Arabia has enough reserves to supply the world till the end of this century. Others, Prof. Dr. Kenneth S. Deffeyes, a Princeton Geologist, Dr Colin J. Campbell, who worked for numerous oil companies also as a geologist, Matthew Simmons, an oil banker, and others, all believe that the Saudi sands are getting empty, and that the Peak is imminent.

Frankly, my gut feeling goes with these so-called 'petro-pessimists.' The sudden spike to $50+ per barrel has a cause. The cause is fear that the oil and gas that dominate our lives will decline and change the world in radical and unpredictable ways.

Suppose this is true. Suppose that the first half of the 150-year-old Age of Oil is about to end. It saw rapid growth of industry, transport, trade, agriculture, financial capital and allowed the population to expand from one to six billion. Suppose that the second half of the Age of Oil now dawns. It certainly looks that today we find ourselves on a plateau, where demand and supply are in balance more or less.

Acknowledge the possibility of a problem.

If that is the case, then sooner than later, the decline of oil and all that depends on it, will follow, including the collapse of our celebrated financial system, followed by the demise of our political structures. If the way governments deal with climate change is any indication, then nothing will be done to prepare the people for Peak Oil. Suppose that 'De Gloria Olivae' has real meaning, what should be our basic survival strategies?

The first thing would be to acknowledge the possibility of a problem. We have done that with global warming, witness Kyoto, and are agonizingly slow to do something. If there is ever a time to exploit renewable energies and have mass transit, it is now. A law to forbid the use of ATVs and Seadoos is long overdue, with snowmobiles use only for trappers. We need today tax grants for hybrid cars, a carbon tax and more fuel taxes to subsidize trains and buses and help those who practice energy conservation. We need a rush on electricity from from wave, tide, wind, solar, hydro and geothermal sources.

Urban life unsustainable

If we don't start now, then I predict that the number of survivors may not greatly exceed the one billion of the pre-oil age. And they won't be found in cities. They'll have to rediscover rural living, regionalism, diversity and local markets, living in harmony with themselves, each other, and in the kind of environment ordained by the limits of nature. Just imagine the transition. A time of great tension as consumers go after dwindling supplies, and as urban life becomes unsustainable.

That all the foregoing is not sheer fiction, consider a new book, *Twilight in the Desert. The Coming Saudi Oil Shock and the World Economy*. It will be in bookstores on May 27. The author is Matthew R. Simmons, a member of that secretive Energy Committee, called into being by his friend Dick Cheney to solve America's future energy needs. Prior to being appointed as Vice President, Cheney was the Chief Executive Officer of Halliburton, now the largest subcontractor for the USA Army. There is no secret, however, what Mr Simmons told the committee: Peak Oil.

Cheney's solution: invade Iraq, and so cement a permanent presence in oil-rich Middle East. The book is a crude wake-up call. Matthew R. Simmons writes that the world is blindly racing toward an energy crisis based on false assumptions about Saudi Arabian oil reserves. In sounding this sudden S.O.S. he in essence says that this Saudi oil shock signifies not only "Twilight in the Desert" but also "Twilight in the West."

A fatal failure

Thanks to free trade, Canadians will be freezing in the dark.

How soon could the crisis come? Simmons believes the fourth quarter of this year – a few months from now – will see the first real crunch as global demand reaches 86 - 87 million barrels per day, which is 2 - 4 million barrels more than the projected supply. Simmons sees prices surging to progressively higher plateaus. In an earlier presentation he suggested that the Oil Producing Exporting Countries (OPEC) need somewhere around $180.00 per barrel to bring them in line with the living standards of the rest of the world.

Who is this Simmons man? Why is he so important? He is the founding member and principal of Simmons & Company International, a $40 billion bank specializing in oil-related activities. The bank is based in Houston, Texas, where Mr Simmons, with 34 years of experience, is in a position as few others to survey the energy scene. This financial expert, wise to the ways of the world, maintains that we Westerners are suffering from a fatal failure of conventional wisdom about oil.

His website indicates that in his many presentations he has constantly fought the notion that better technology would prolong our oil independence. Writes he: " The only thing better tools have done is advance the depletion time." He also continuously argued against an industry consensus that the oil industry would face a supply glut. In reality demand grew from 70 million barrels a day in 1995 to 83 million barrels per day in 2004, while the cost of finding new and replacement reserves has increased dramatically, because recently discovered fields have been smaller with lower quantities of poorer quality resource.

The smell test

His book is basically about Saudi Arabia, which has been the world's most reliable oil producer for 70 years and said to be the storehouse of more of the same. So analysts everywhere expect it to deliver endless energy forever. This supposition, says Simmons, has all been wrong. Here is how he describes it: "I took an accidental trip to Saudi Arabia in February 2003, and what I saw didn't pass the smell test. We've always been told they had 260 billion barrels of reserves in 80 fields, but they weren't behaving that way."

Saudi oil abundance – a myth

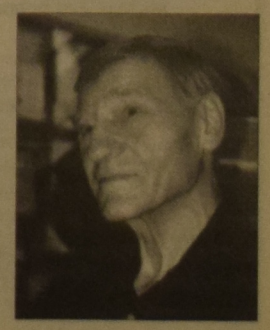
He was particularly struck by Saudi efforts to rehabilitate old oil fields. "Why were they doing that if they had 80 [untapped] fields?" Simmons wondered.

On his return to the States, Simmons scoured the digitised archives of the Society for Petroleum Engineers, where he found 235 technical papers spanning many years which when pieced together presented the actual truth about Saudi oil. The upshot is that Saudi oil diversity and abundance is a myth. Hence Saudi Oil Shock, a genuinely worrying S.O.S.

In his book he describes how for the last four decades, 90 percent of Saudi Arabia's 8-9 million barrels of oil per day has come from just five giant fields. 85 percent of the remaining 10 percent comes from just 3 other fields. By contrast, America produces 5.5 million barrels per day from 8,000 wells. These so-called "miracle" fields are now mature and need extensive coaching to keep up the supply.

What worries Simmons the most is that there is plentiful evidence that the Saudi oil company Aramco spent $17-18 billion exploring for new reserves only to come up dry. Another worry is that, worldwide, there are just 14 fields that provide 20 percent of all oil output. Simmons noted that if his research is correct, and sustainable Saudi production has already passed, then global oil supply has also peaked.

About Canadian tar sands and South American shales, Simmons said it was critical not to confuse the two types of oil. "They're real and the economics work, but these are high energy intensity projects that can never reach high volumes. They are not a substitute for high flow rate oil." Simmons claims that "there's a better chance we'll be living on the moon than find enough oil to sustain current and projected demand. Oil will peak and it is not renewable." Saudi Oil Shock. S.O.S.



Earlier columns and different writings, essays, books can be seen at 'hielema.ca'
Bert Hielema (bert@hielema.ca)

Classifieds

Personals

Man, 40 years old, would like to meet a Christian woman in her 30s and living in Southern Ontario.
Reply to: File 4747
c/o Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St
St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7

Birthdays

Mrs. **Jessie (Smid) (Swart)**

We wish to congratulate Mother (Bepe) on the occasion of your **90th Birthday** on June 6th, 2005.
May God bless you and be with you on that day.

Your children and grandchildren

Address: 16 Layng Drive
Athens ON K0E1B0

John Swytink

is looking forward to celebrating his **90th Birthday** on June 18, 2005

We, his family, give thanks for his presence in our lives and pray that he may enjoy health, strength and peace.

Praise the Lord!
O give thanks to the Lord,
for he is good. Psalm 106:1

Dad would love to greet family and friends at an **Open House** to be held June 18, 2005 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church 301 Scott Street, St. Catharines.

Correspondence: John & Jenny Swytink
413 Linwell Rd Apt 208
St Catharines ON L2M 7Y2

Anniversaries

1980 May 10 2005

We wish to announce the **25th Anniversary** of

DAVID AND BELINDA DROK (nee **Drenth**)

Congratulations!
We thank and praise God for the years he has blessed them, may they have many more.

With much love and best wishes,
Dad & Mom, Kristen and Rachelle

Mailing Address: 3860 Kingsway Drive
Crown Point IN 46307

Springdale, Ontario Newmarket, Ontario
June 18th, 1955 June 18th, 2005

With thankfulness to God for his faithfulness throughout the years, we joyfully announce the **50th Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

MARINUS (Mike) AND EMMY VOORBERG (nee **Rauwerda**)

With love,
Shirley & Gerald Deelstra
Emily, Benjamin and Abigail
Robert & Michelle Voorberg
Michael and Shannen
Lisa & Albert Otten
Ian, Eric and Luke
Caroline & Robert Duimering
Lauren and Kristen

An **Open House** will be held at 654 Foxcroft Blvd. Newmarket, Ontario from 2-5 p.m. on Saturday, June 18, 2005.
Best wishes only.

Home Address: 80 Hamilton Drive
Newmarket ON L3Y 3E8

Anniversaries

1955 Springdale 2005

We thank God for our parents

AUKE AND ADDY ELLENS

and wish them his blessings as they celebrate their **50th Wedding Anniversary** on June 7, 2005.

With love,
Joni & Norman Knibbe
Eric & Jo-Anne Ellens
Christian & Saskia Ellens
Jessica & Dale Antonides
Audrey & Maurice Ferkranus
Rosemarie & Rob Radcliffe
and grandchildren.

Open House from 7-9 p.m.
Saturday, June 11, 2005 at
Springdale Christian Reformed Church.

Home Address: 5 Hillsview Rd RR 4
Bradford ON L3Z 2A6

1955 June 1 2005
Stratford, Ontario

Delight yourself in the Lord
and he will give the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

We give praise and thanksgiving to God, together with our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

HENRY AND IETJE OLBACH (nee **Snoeyer**)

on the occasion of their **50th Wedding Anniversary** on June 1, 2005

With all our love:
Fred & Marg Olbach
David & Chantelle, Rebecca & Jeremy – Tyce
James, Rachel
John & Hilda Olbach
Henry, Eric, Luke, Simon, Christopher
JoAnna & Paul Steele
Paul & Nicole, Lydia, Anna, Nathan, Adele
Karen & Cliff Knip
Cameron, Joanna, Maria, Kelvin
Peter Olbach

We would like to invite you to celebrate with us during an **OPEN HOUSE** on Saturday, June 18, 2005 at Downie Optimist Community Centre St. Pauls, Ontario from 3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Your presence will be a gift to us.

Home address: RR# 7 St Marys ON N4X 1C9

1935 May 29 2005

With thanksgiving to God for his continuing faithfulness we hope D.V. to celebrate the **70th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents

JACK AND LOUISA BYLSMA

Congratulations Dad and Mom with all our love

Corrie Bergman (Jans †)
Tina Stienstra (Henry †)
Mike & Betty Bylsma
Florence & Ben Olthoft

Open House will be held May 28, 2005 at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Woodstock Ont. 577 Norwich Ave. from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Home address: 110 Beale St Apt#202
Woodstock N4S 6X5

1945 June 13 2005
Andijk N, Holland Aylmer, Ontario

The Lord will keep your going out and coming in from this time forth and forevermore. Psalm 121:8

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father we want to announce the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our dear parents

MARTIN (Tinus) AND NEL WEVERINK (Tensen)

The Lord brought you as a young couple across the ocean, to raise a family and serve him in this new land as pilgrims.
He has blessed you richly.
He was near you all the way, through sickness and health, through hard times as well as good times,

"Great is thy faithfulness"

It is the prayer of your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren that the Lord may continue to be with you in the years he has yet prepared for you here on earth.

Theresa & Neil Van Gurp
Hank & Louise Weverink
Len & Jane Weverink
Marian & Henry Weesjes
Judi & Jeff Hanenburg
Victor & Ena Weverink
and families

Open House will be held, the Lord willing on Saturday June 18, from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. in the Aylmer CRC Fellowship Hall on the corner of Caverly Road and South Street, Aylmer, Ontario.

Home address: Apt#109 Heritage Place
110 Caverly Rd
Aylmer ON N5H 2P4

Obituaries

March 11, 1935 May 7, 2005
Dokkum, Friesland Belleville, Ont.

FRANCES (Froukje) DYKSTRA,
nee **Burmania**

Went home to her Lord and Saviour after a very short illness, surrounded by, and in the arms of her family.

She was the beloved wife of just over 50 years of Nick Dykstra, and mother and nanny of

Alice & John Rekman of *Camlachie, Ont.*
Andrea & Carl, Janelle, Mark, Brad
Chuck & Joanne Dykstra of *Brampton, Ont.*
Lisa, Eric, Michelle, Peter
Rick & Yvonne Dykstra of *St. Catharines, Ont.*
Joel, Erin, Steve, Daryl

She was the dear sister of Owen & Kina Burmania of *Minden, Ont.* and Jerry & Laura Burmania of *Uxbridge, Ont.* She was predeceased by her brothers Auke and John. She will be much missed as a sister-in-law and aunt by Hessel & Connie Dykstra and family of *Bloomfield, Ont.*, Bill & Ginny Dykstra and family of *Severn Bridge, Ont.*, Rennie & Marten VanderWal and family of *Foxboro, Ont.* and Jane & John Breukelaar and family of *Peterborough, Ont.*

On May 11, 2005 we celebrated her life with a service at the Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church of Belleville, Ont.

Home address: Nick Dykstra
275 Avonlough Rd
Belleville ON K8N 4Z2

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

Our Shepherd-King, Jesus, called home his servant

PENNY KITS-GROENEVELD

on May 15, 2005.
She was in her seventy-third year when she left us.

We will miss her very much, but also have abundant fond memories which we always will treasure. We remember her for her faithfulness and caring attitude.

Her husband (for almost 51 years)
Jakob H. Kits

Her children and grandchildren
Harry & Marian Kits, *Toronto*
Gerda, Joel
John & Cathy Kits, *Langley*
Amanda, Rebecca, Alisa, Aidan
Betty & Terry Goldstein-Kits, *Edmonton*
David, Erick, Jakob, Benjamin
Lynn & Ed Molenkamp, *Edmonton*
Steven, Michael, Matthew, Patricia
Eugene & Roxanne Kits, *Edmonton*
Jeffrey

Her brothers
George & Marjorie Groeneveld, *Red Deer*
Floyd & Alice Groeneveld, *Red Deer*
Jake & Rennie Groeneveld, *Mission*
Len & Tina Groeneveld, *Maple Ridge*

On Thursday, May 19, 2005, Penny's family, with relatives, neighbors, and friends, gave thanks to the LORD for what he gave us in the life of our dear wife, mother, Grandma, Oma, sister, neighbor and friend. This service took place in the building of the Orthodox Reformed Congregation, Edmonton.

Penny herself requested that if you wish, memorial donations may be made to the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), specifically so that one or more sewing machines be given to poor families in a developing country.

Home address: Jakob H. Kits, #303
11561 – 136 Street
Edmonton AB T5M 4C3

Job Opportunities

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For *information - Nico and Alice Jukema.*
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email: guestsuite@lilbitcountry.ca
web: www.lilbitcountry.ca

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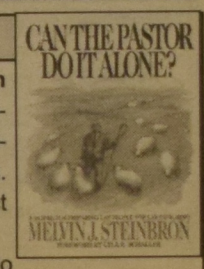
Books Wanted



We need 15-20 copies (new or used) of the book **"Can the Pastor Do It Alone?"** by Melvin J. Steinbron, published by Regal Books from Gospel Light, Ventura, California, 1987. We are willing pay the shipping charges. If you have copies you are willing to sell, please contact us at: **bethelcrc@bellnet.ca or905-774-7285.**
Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Dunnville, Ontario

Ministry and School job opportunities

ORDAINED WORSHIP LEADER:

Westend CRC, a congregation of 786 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is looking for an outgoing,hardworking individual to join our Ministry Team. A person with gifts in the area of worship leadership and musical talent is the perfect fit for this full-time position. Preaching and pastoral duties will be required from time to time, but are not the main focus of the job. We look forward to hearing from individuals who are interested in leading, organizing, and inspiring our dedicated congregation in worship. Additional responsibilities will include Outreach and/or Adult Ministries depending on the qualifications of the candidate.
For more information, contact Search Committee Chair June Atsma at **(616)453-0320** or **jatsma@schs.org**

STOUFFVILLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is inviting applications for an opening at the primary level, 1 & 2, and a possible opening at the intermediate level, 7 & 8. Strengths in French, science and or music would be an asset. Consider joining this small but passionate school as we seek to provide first rate Christ-centered education.
Contact Jake Vriend at **scsjake@bellnet.ca** or **905 640 3297**

GRACE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH,
Chatham, Ontario is looking for a
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Interested applicants may contact the Church Office.
Grace CRC, PO Box 337, 255 Tweedsmuir Ave W.,
Chatham ON N7M 5K4
or grace@ciaccess.com or call (519) 436-1558
for information and a job description.

Available for call

The council of Bethel CRC of Lacombe, Alberta announces that
REV. KIRK MACNEIL
is available for call.
Pastor Kirk can be reached at
13011 - 39 Street, Edmonton Alberta T5A 5A3
by email at rational@telusplanet.net or janetandkirk@msn.com
or by phone at (780) 456 - 5362

COVENANT CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
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who provides music that supports and enhances worship, creatively uses a broad knowledge base of traditional and contemporary music, and collaborates with the worship committee to plan worship services. This is a part-time position. Key board skills are necessary. Pleas include education and experience in your resume. Position available in June/05. The church is located on Lansdowne Ave. in Woodstock, Ontario, Canada.
For more information visit
pebbles37@sympatico.ca, or phone Deb at **519-539-1806**.

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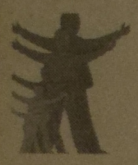

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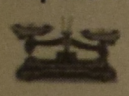

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For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Ephesians 2:10

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Events

On July 1-3, 2005

THE NOBLEFORD CRC
invites all former members and interested persons to join us in celebrating 100 years of God's faithfulness.
A combined **picnic** with the Granum CRC is scheduled for July 1 at Park Lake with many planned activities. On Saturday, there will be an historical tour of the area followed by an open house at the original church now located in Picture Butte. A **banquet** will be held at the Nobleford Community Complex on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. (Registration required) On Sunday, the morning **worship service** will be held at the Community Complex at 10:00 a.m. with **lunch** to follow. A second service is planned for 1:30 p.m. at Nobleford CRC.
For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynenbelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at **bpkbelt@telus.net** Website **www.noblefordcrc.com**

FRISIAN SERVICE
July 10, 2005 3:00 p.m.
in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church
Rev. John Hellinga will be preaching.

DUTCH SERVICE
June 26, 2005 3:00 p.m
in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church
Rev. Jacob Kuntz will be preaching.

Charlottetown Christian Reformed Church
will be celebrating ***50 years*** of ministry on July10, 2005. Celebration activties will be on the weekend of **July 8-10**.
For more information, contact the church office at **902-894-4721** or email: chtowncrc@pei.aibn.com.

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF KENTVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA
will be celebrating its **50th Anniversary**,
June 24-26, 2005.

We start the celebration on Friday **June 24** at 5:30 p.m. at St Joseph's RC Church's multi-purpose room, 43 Belcher Street, Kentville N.S. Come join us for an evening of praise and lots of fellowship and reminiscing, with potluck supper, followed by a program commemorating God's faithfulness.

*On Saturday **June 25**, Open House between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. at our own facilities – Kentville CRC, 118 Oakdene Ave. Kentville, N.S.* Displays, information tables, and much more including lunch.
On Sunday, **June 26** come join us for a **special celebration service** at 10:00 a.m. We extend an invitation to all former members and friends of our congregation to join us in celebrating God's faithfulness over the last 50 years.

For more details please contact Gerrit Tenyenhuis,
phone 1-902-678-7641 or gtenyenhuis@ns.sympatico.ca
Or the church at 1-902-678-6293 or fax 1-902-679-5230.
Email: kentvillecrc@ns.sympatico.ca

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line.

May 30 - June 3 Milk & Honey Festival at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**. The "Stories of Life, Stories for Life" theme features lectures by Dr. James Rusthoven and Professor Johanna Kuyvenhoven, concerts and excursions. For registration contact: Redeemer Box Office 877-779-0913 ext 4211.

June 8 Hollandse Dag, 10 a.m. at the **Moorefield** Community Centre. For more information call H. Rumph at 1-519-638-2053.

June 8 Hollandse Dag at 1st **Kingston** CRC, 10 a.m. Rev. Peter VanEgmond will speak .More info: E. Hiddema, (613) 546-5615.

June 24-26 Christian Reformed Church of **Kentville, Nova Scotia** will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary. For more details contace Gerrit Tenyenhuis, ph.1-902-678-7641 or gtenyenhuis@nssympatico.ca or the church at 1-902-678-6293 or fax 1-902-679-5230. Email: kentvillecrc@ns.sympatico.ca

June 26 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Jacob Kuntz will be preaching.

July 1-3 Nobleford CRC 100 year anniversary celebrations with picnic, banquet and services. For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynenbelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at bpkbelt@telus.net

July 8-10 Charlottetown Christian Ref. Church will be celebrating 50 years of ministry. For information, contact the church office at **902-894-4721** or email: chtowncrc@pei.aibn.com.

July 10 Frisian Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Hellinga will be preaching.

Timothy Christian School

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

With praise and thanks to God we announce the opening of our new school building. Come celebrate with us as we dedicate the new Timothy Christian School in Barrie at 750 Essa Road on

Saturday, June 4, 2005 at 2:00 p.m.

A brief ribbon cutting ceremony will be followed by an unveiling of the cornerstone, a helium balloon release, and a stand-up reception. We look forward to seeing you there!
Please contact the school for further information.
Timothy Christian School
750 Essa Road, **Barrie** ON L4N 9E9
(705) 726-6621
www.timothychristianschool.ca
tcsgen@timothychristianschool.ca

Retirement Annoucements

The Trenton Christian School Community congratulates

IKE WITTEVEEN
on his retirement.

Ike has served his Lord
and many school communities
within the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
as a teacher and principal for 39 years.

Program and reception 7:30 p.m. Saturday, June 18th
at Ebenezer CRC 18 Fourth Ave., Trenton

The Georgetown District
Christian School Community
congratulates

CORRIE BOOTSMA
on her retirement!
Corrie has served with the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools for 40 years, as a teacher and principal!

May God richly bless you in all you do.

"I thank my God everytime I remember you.." Phil 1:3

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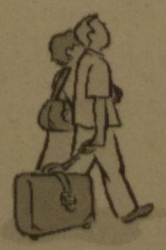
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Arabs dance with democratic reforms

AMMAN, Jordan (Zenit.org) – The third Arab Human Development Report was released April 7 in Amman, the capital of Jordan. An independent group of Arab scholars and intellectuals put together the report, published by the U.N. Development Program (UNDP).

The report focused on the situation of political freedoms and how governments carry out their responsibilities toward their citizens. "Freedom is pivotal in human development," the report notes in its introduction.

But, according to the authors: "By 21st century standards, Arab countries have not met the Arab people's aspirations for development, security and liberation despite variations between one country and another in that respect. Indeed, there is a near-complete consensus that there is a serious failing in the Arab world, and that this is located specifically in the political sphere."

Lagging behind

The authors recommend a rapid acceleration of democratic reform. The report warns that pressures for political changes are building up and if action is not taken by governments they could face social upheaval in coming years.

The report rejects arguments that the Arab world has lagged behind in establishing democratic institutions due to cultural factors. The main cause for a lack of democracy, they argue, is political. The authors cite the decades-long imposition of emergency powers by authorities across the region, the systematic suppression of independent courts and parliaments, and the double standards of foreign powers. These foreign powers, the authors say, have accepted or even encouraged authoritarian rule in exchange for political stability and access to energy supplies.

Not all is negative. "There is a change in mind-sets in the region," said Rima Khalaf Hunaidi, U.N. assistant secretary-general and director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States at the UNDP, who has been the chief overseer of the Arab Human Development Reports. "We are moving with greater confidence in a new direction now, and there is a strong awareness of the irreversibility of change – change driven by the Arab street, not change adopted from afar."

Among the achievements listed in the report are the initiatives taken by private groups who have agitated for reform by organizing petitions and peaceful protests. However, overall the pace of progress has been disappointingly limited, the report states.

Black holes

The report termed the excessive concentration of power in many Arab states as a kind of political "black hole" at the center of civil life. Be it military dictatorships, monarchy or a president elected without any real competition, the result is an overwhelming concentration of power by the executive.

This means that the judiciary is prevented from carrying out its role of safeguarding the rights of the citizenry. "Where there is conflict between a political regime unfettered by legal controls and the judiciary,... the Arab regime swiftly sweeps aside the independence of the judiciary without any hesitation," says the report.

Another factor behind the concentration of power is "clannism," which, the report argues, reinforces a mind-set of passivity and obedience to authority, along with intolerance of dissent. Corruption is another serious problem. In many cases, the report alleges, corruption is institutionalized in government and business.

Often the freedoms guaranteed by the constitution in some Arab states are not implemented in laws passed by the legislature, so that basic rights are often restricted. Many of the constitutional provisions, says the report, are "an empty facade."

Take freedom of assembly: most Arab constitutions provide for freedom of assembly, but many countries prohibit or restrict the exercise of the right to strike, demonstrate, hold mass gatherings or assemble peacefully.

Or freedom of the press: currently, press freedom can be blocked or curtailed by censorship in 11 Arab countries. Similar problems exist regarding the workings of the justice system.

Victims of violence

Another problem area is violence against civilians. The report condemns terrorist actions against civilians, whether carried out by extremist groups through assassinations and bombings, or by means of armed confrontations between security forces and armed groups that often result in civilian casualties.

"These unacceptable acts affect children, women and old people who are innocent by any decent human standards, or any religious teaching,"states the report.

Also condemned are foreign occupations, particularly the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, which, they argue, continues to violate the individual and collective freedoms of Palestinians through assassinations, raids on heavily populated civilian areas, arbitrary arrests, house demolitions and repeated closures. According to the report some 24,000 Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip have been made homeless by Israeli demolitions between 2000 and 2004.

The authors also single out for condemnation the attacks against civilian noncombatants by armed militants in Iraq – as well as the civilian casualties of armed actions by American-led occupation forces in the country, who they charge have failed to meet their obligations under the Geneva Convention to provide security to Iraqi citizens.

Reforms recommended

Due to its oil resources Arab nations will likely continue to be the object of continued interest by major world powers, the report notes, and they are likely to press for democratic reforms. The authors would prefer to see reforms implemented as part of an internal process of change, but they admit that the Arab world cannot afford to ignore these outside pressures.

Perhaps the best situation, they suggest, would be if those Arabs interested in promoting reforms seize the opportunities that come about as a result of the external initiatives to lead the reform process from within.

A number of recommendations on how to overcome the lack of democracy and respect for rights accompany the report. Among the specific reform proposals are the following points.

- •Enshrining total respect for the key freedoms of opinion, expression and association.
- •Ending all types of marginalization and discrimination against social groups and minorities.
- •Guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary and ending reliance on military tribunals and other "exceptional" courts.
- •Abolishing the "states of emergency" that have become permanent features of governance in the region.

The report rejects the idea that the reforms proposed are merely a Western view of freedom and human rights, alien to the Arab world. As an example the authors explain that there are sections of the Koran that recognize the value of religious freedom. And in the past, mainly the ninth and 19th centuries, there have been periods of relative freedom. Such freedom is urgently needed again, the report insists, even if achieving it will not be easy.

News Digest

Hotshot berries

Bunchberry dogwoods – flowering shrubs with edible berries – are remarkable to more than the moose that eat them. Researchers have found that when the dogwood flowers eject pollen, they display the fastest movement yet recorded in a plant. When the petals part and the stamen flips upward, it accelerates at a rate that would leave a BMW eating dust.

A team of biologists and physicists from Williams College in Massachusetts and Oberlin College in Ohio used a high-speed camera to film the flowers as they let fly. For the first three milliseconds the flowers opened, the stamens accelerated at a blurring 24,000 meters per second. Despite all that acceleration, they reach a top speed of only about 3 meters a second (six miles an hour). But that's enough to hurl the pollen to a height nearly 10 times that of the flower. The team described its discovery in the latest issue of the journal *Nature*.

Reminds me of how I start up in the morning – after that initial jerk, I slow down a lot too.

(*Christian Science Monitor*)

Canada goose ethic

Canadian Geese fly in V-formations because it is the most aerodynamically efficient means of traveling thousands of miles. No one goose could last even 15 minutes in that extremely difficult position. Each goose flies only a few minutes in the front, then drops back to the next position and then the next until they are the last in line which is the easiest position (they can coast before going again to the front) making a full rotation about once an hour.

As they fly, the "resting" geese in the back honk encouragement to the hard workers ahead of them. As each bird flaps it wings it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. In a V-formation, the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own....

If a goose is ill or injured and must go to the ground to recover, two or four geese go with it so when it recovers it will have a V formation to fly in until they are able to rejoin the larger flock.

Before you get all gooey and sentimental about this behavior, let me remind you that the air force practices a similar ethic.

(*Internet*)

Giving older drivers the rush

The director of the Social and Cultural Planning Office in The Netherlands suggested older motorists should be given a special licence allowing them to use the roads at a reduced rate outside the rush hour. He suggests creating a special "grey" number plate. Cars with the cheaper grey plates would only be allowed on the road after the morning rush hour.

Research show that elderly people continue to make regular use of their cars after they retire and, strangely enough, they tend to travel at the same times as commuters. The introduction of grey plates could contribute to relieving congestion on the roads.

One of those germinal ideas: it could give birth to a whole rainbow of colored plates. Yellow ones for people who are afraid of highways and are restricted to side roads. Bright red ones for those who drive too fast, only allowed on the road between midnight and 6 a.m. Purple ones for people with cars that have no zip – allowed only on the inside lane. Bright blue ones for errant husbands prohibiting them from visiting certain designated areas of the city. Bright pink plates for Liberals, who are blushing with embarrassment.